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OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

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VOL. 894.

DOCTOR MARIGOLD'S PRESCRIPTIONS;
MUGBY JUNCTION.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

IN ONE VOLUME.

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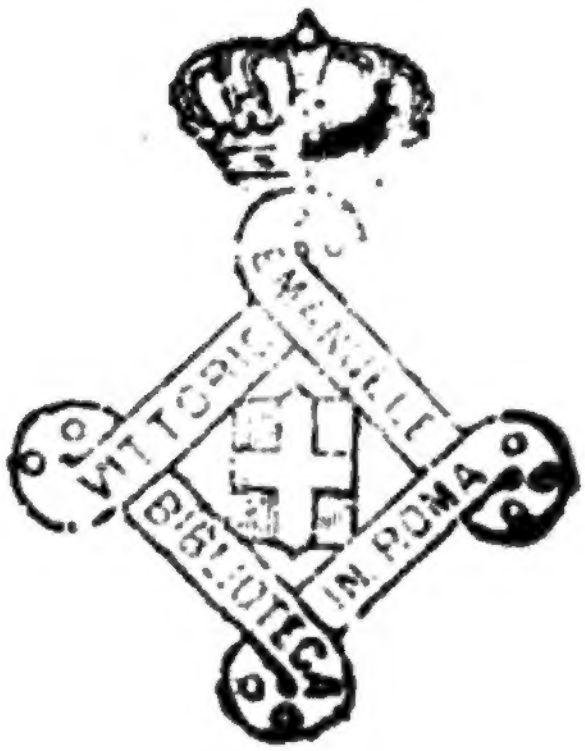
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BY

CHARLES DICKENS

AND THE AUTHORS NAMED AT THE HEAD OF THE STORIES.



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DOCTOR MARIGOLD'S PRESCRIPTIONS.

To be taken Immediately	**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
Not to be taken at Bed-time	**By Miss Mulholland.**
To be taken at the dinner-table	**By Mr. Charles Collins.**
Not to be taken for granted	**By Miss Hesba Stretton.**
To be taken in Water	**By Mr. Thornbury.**
To be taken with a grain of Salt	**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
To be taken and tried	**By Mrs. Gascoyne.**
To be taken for Life	**By Mr. Charles Dickens**

I.

TO BE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY.

I AM a Cheap Jack, and my own father's name was Willum Marigold. It was in his lifetime supposed by some that his name was William, but by own father always consistently said, No, it was Willum. On which point I content myself with looking at the argument this way: — If a man is not allowed to know his own name in a free country, how much is he allowed to know in a land of slavery? As to looking at the argument through the medium of the Register, Willum Marigold come into the world before Registers come up much — and went out of it too. They wouldn't have been greatly in his line neither, if they had chanced to come up before him.

I was born on the Queen's highway, but it was the

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King's at that time. A doctor was fetched to my own mother by my own father, when it took place on a common; and in consequence of his being a very kind gentleman, and accepting no fee but a tea-tray, I was named Doctor, out of gratitude and compliment to him. There you have me. Doctor Marigold.

I am at present a middle-aged man of a broadish build, in cords, leggings, and a sleeved waistcoat the strings of which is always gone behind. Repair them how you will, they go like fiddle-strings. You have been to the theatre, and you have seen one of the wiolin-players screw up his wiolin, after listening to it as if it had been whispering the secret to him that it feared it was out of order, and then you have heard it snap. That's as exactly similar to my waistcoat, as a waistcoat and a wiolin can be like one another.

I am partial to a white hat, and I like a shawl round my neck wore loose and easy. Sitting down is my favourite posture. If I have a taste in point of personal jewellery, it is mother-of-pearl buttons. There you have me again, as large as life.

The doctor having accepted a tea-tray, you'll guess that my father was a Cheap Jack before me. You are right. He was. It was a pretty tray. It represented a large lady going along a serpentining up-hill gravel-walk, to attend a little church. Two swans had likewise come astray with the same intentions. When I call her a large lady, I don't mean in point of breadth, for there she fell below my views, but she more than made it up in heighth; her heighth and slimness was — in short THE heighth of both.

I often saw that tray, after I was the innocently

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smiling cause (or more likely screeching one) of the doctor's standing it up on a table against the wall in his consulting-room. Whenever my own father and mother were in that part of the country, I used to put my head (I have heard my own mother say it was flaxen curls at that time, though you wouldn't know an old hearth-broom from it now, till you come to the handle and found it wasn't me) in at the doctor's door, and the doctor was always glad to see me, and said, "Aha, my brother practitioner! Come in, little M.D. How are your inclinations as to sixpence?"

You can't go on for ever, you'll find, nor yet could my father nor yet my mother. If you don't go off as a whole when you are about due, you're liable to go off in part, and two to one your head's the part. Gradually my father went off his, and my mother went off hers. It was in a harmless way, but it put out the family where I boarded them. The old couple, though retired, got to be wholly and solely devoted to the Cheap Jack business, and were always selling the family off. Whenever the cloth was laid for dinner, my father began rattling the plates and dishes, as we do in our line when we put up crockery for a bid, only he had lost the trick of it, and mostly let 'em drop and broke 'em. As the old lady had been used to sit in the cart, and hand the articles out one by one to the old gentleman on the footboard to sell, just in the same way she handed him every item of the family's property, and they disposed of it in their own imaginations from morning to night. At last the old gentleman, lying bed-ridden in the same room with the old lady, cries out in the old patter, fluent, after having been silent for two days and nights: "Now here, my

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jolly companions every one — which the Nightingale club in a village was held, At the sign of the Cabbage and Shears, Where the singers no doubt would have greatly excelled, But for want of taste voices and ears — now here, my jolly companions every one, is a working model of a used-up old Cheap Jack, without a tooth in his head, and with a pain in every bone: so like life that it would be just as good if it wasn't better, just as bad if it wasn't worse, and just as new if it wasn't worn out. Bid for the working model of the old Cheap Jack, who has drunk more gunpowder-tea with the ladies in his time than would blow the lid off a washerwoman's copper, and carry it as many thousands of miles higher than the moon as nought nix nought, divided by the national debt, carry nothing to the poor-rates, three under, and two over. Now my hearts of oak and men of straw, what do you say for the lot? Two shillings, a shilling, tenpence, eightpence, sixpence, fourpence. Twopence? Who said twopence? The gentleman in the scarecrow's hat? I am ashamed of the gentleman in the scarecrow's hat. I really am ashamed of him for his want of public spirit. Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Come! I'll throw you in a working model of a old woman that was married to the old Cheap Jack so long ago, that upon my word and honour it took place in Noah's Ark, before the Unicorn could get in to forbid the banns by blowing a tune upon his horn. There now! Come! What do you say for both? I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I don't bear you malice for being so backward. Here! If you make me a bid that'll only reflect a little credit on your town, I'll throw you in a warming-pan for nothing,

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and lend you a toasting-fork for life. Now come; what do you say after that splendid offer? Say two pound, say thirty shillings, say a pound, say ten shillings, say five, say two and six. You don't say even two and six? You say two and three? No. You shan't have the lot for two and three. I'd sooner give it you, if you was goodlooking enough. Here! Missis! Chuck the old man and woman into the cart, put the horse to, and drive 'em away and bury 'em!" Such were the last words of Willum Marigold, my own father, and they were carried out, by him and by his wife my own mother on one and the same day, as I ought to know, having followed as mourner.

My father had been a lovely one in his time at the Cheap Jack work, as his dying observations went to prove. But I top him. I don't say it because it's myself, but because it has been universally acknowledged by all that has had the means of comparison. I have worked at it. I have measured myself against other public speakers, Members of Parliament, Platforms, Pulpits, Counsel learned in the law — and where I have found 'em good, I have took a bit of imitation from 'em, and where I have found 'em bad, I have let 'em alone. Now I'll tell you what. I mean to go down into my grave declaring that of all the callings ill used in Great Britain, the Cheap Jack calling is the worst used. Why ain't we a profession? Why ain't we endowed with privileges? Why are we forced to take out a hawkers' license, when no such thing is expected of the political hawkers? Where's the difference betwixt us? Except that we are Cheap Jacks and they are Dear Jacks, *I* don't see any difference but what's in our favour.

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For look here! Say it's election-time. I am on the footboard of my cart in the market-place on a Saturday night. I put up a general miscellaneous lot. I say: "Now here my free and independent woters, I'm a going to give you such a chance as you never had in all your born days, nor yet the days preceding. Now I'll show you what I am a going to do with you. Here's a pair of razors that'll shave you closer than the Board of Guardians, here's a flat-iron worth its weight in gold, here's a frying-pan artificially flavoured with essence of beefsteaks to that degree that you've only got for the rest of your lives to fry bread and dripping in it and there you are replete with animal food, here's a genuine chronometer watch in such a solid silver case that you may knock at the door with it when you come home late from a social meeting and rouse your wife and family and save up your knocker for the postman, and here's half a dozen dinner plates that you may play the cymbals with to charm the baby when it's fractious. Stop! I'll throw you in another article and I'll give you that, and it's a rolling-pin, and if the baby can only get it well into its mouth when its teeth is coming and rub the gums once with it, they'll come through double, in a fit of laughter equal to being tickled. Stop again! I'll throw you in another article, because I don't like the looks of you, for you haven't the appearance of buyers unless I lose by you, and because I'd rather lose than not take money to-night, and that's a looking-glass in which you may see how ugly you look when you don't bid. What do you say now? Come! Do you say a pound? Not you, for you haven't got it. Do you say ten shillings? Not you, for you owe more to the tallyman.

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Well then, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll heap 'em all on the footboard of the cart — there they are! razors, flat-iron, frying-pan, chronometer watch, dinner plates, rolling-pin, and looking-glass — take 'em all away for four shillings, and I'll give you sixpence for your trouble!" This is me, the Cheap Jack. But on the Monday morning, in the same market-place, comes the Dear Jack on the hustings — *his* cart — and what does *he* say? "Now my free and independent woters, I am a going to give you such a chance" (he begins just like me) "as you never had in all your born days, and that's the chance of sending Myself to Parliament. Now I'll tell you what I am a going to do for you. Here's the interests of this magnificent town promoted above all the rest of the civilised and uncivilised earth. Here's your railways carried, and your neighbours' railways jockeyed. Here's all your sons in the Post-office. Here's Britannia smiling on you. Here's the eyes of Europe on you. Here's uniwersal prosperity for you, repletion of animal food, golden cornfields, gladsome homesteads, and rounds of applause from your own hearts, all in one lot and that's myself. Will you take me as I stand? You won't? Well then, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Come now! I'll throw you in anything you ask for. There! Church-rates, abolition of church-rates, more malt tax, no malt tax, uniwersal education to the highest mark or uniwersal ignorance to the lowest, total abolition of flogging in the army or a dozen for every private once a month all round, Wrongs of Men or Rights of Women, — only say which it shall be, take 'em or leave 'em, and I'm of your opinion altogether, and the lot's your own on your own terms. There!

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You won't take it yet? Well then, I'll tell you what I'll do with you. Come! You *are* such free and independent woters, and I *am* so proud of you — you *are* such a noble and enlightened constituency, and I *am* so ambitious of the honour and dignity of being your member, which is by far the highest level to which the wings of the human mind can soar — that I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll throw you in all the public-houses in your magnificent town for nothing. Will that content you? It won't? You won't take the lot yet? Well then, before I put the horse in and drive away, and make the offer to the next most magnificent town that can be discovered, I'll tell you what I'll do. Take the lot, and I'll drop two thousand pound in the streets of your magnificent town for them to pick up that can. Not enough? Now look here. This is the very furthest that I'm a going to. I'll make it two thousand five hundred. And still you won't? Here, missis! Put the horse — no, stop half a moment, I shouldn't like to turn my back upon you neither for a trifle, I'll make it two thousand seven hundred and fifty pound. There! Take the lot on your own terms, and I'll count out two thousand seven hundred and fifty pound on the footboard of the cart, to be dropped in the streets of your magnificent town for them to pick up that can. What do you say? Come now! You won't do better, and you may do worse. You take it? Hooray! Sold again, and got the seat!"

These Dear Jacks soap the people shameful, but we Cheap Jacks don't. We tell 'em the truth about themselves to their faces, and scorn to court 'em. As to wenturesomeness in the way of puffing up the lots, the Dear Jacks beat us hollow. It is considered in the

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Cheap Jack calling that better patter can be made out of a gun than any article we put up from the cart, except a pair of spectacles. I often hold forth about a gun for a quarter of an hour, and feel as if I need never leave off. But when I tell 'em what the gun can do, and what the gun has brought down, I never go half so far as the Dear Jacks do when they make speeches in praise of *their* guns — their great guns that set 'em on to do it. Besides, I'm in business for myself, I ain't sent down into the market-place to order, as they are. Besides again, my guns don't know what I say in their laudation, and their guns do, and the whole concern of 'em have reason to be sick and ashamed all round. These are some of my arguments for declaring that the Cheap Jack calling is treated ill in Great Britain, and for turning warm when I think of the other Jacks in question setting themselves up to pretend to look down upon it.

I courted my wife from the footboard of the cart. I did indeed. She was a Suffolk young woman, and it was in Ipswich market-place right opposite the corn-chandler's shop. I had noticed her up at a window last Saturday that was, appreciating highly. I had took to her, and I had said to myself, "If not already disposed of, I'll have that lot." Next Saturday that come, I pitched the cart on the same pitch, and I was in very high feather indeed, keeping 'em laughing the whole of the time and getting off the goods briskly. At last I took out of my waistcoat-pocket a small lot wrapped in soft paper, and I put it this way (looking up at the window where she was). "Now here my blooming English maidens is an article, the last article of the present evening's sale, which I offer to only

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you the lovely Suffolk Dumplings biling over with beauty, and I won't take a bid of a thousand pound for, from any man alive. Now what is it? Why, I'll tell you what it is. It's made of fine gold, and it's not broke though there's a hole in the middle of it, and it's stronger than any fetter that ever was forged, though it's smaller than any finger in my set of ten. Why ten? Because when my parents made over my property to me, I tell you true, there was twelve sheets, twelve towels, twelve table-cloths, twelve knives, twelve forks, twelve table-spoons, and twelve teaspoons, but my set of fingers was two short of a dozen and could never since be matched. Now what else is it? Come I'll tell you. It's a hoop of solid gold, wrapped in a silver curl-paper that I myself took off the shining locks of the ever beautiful old lady in Threadneedle-street, London city. I wouldn't tell you so if I hadn't the paper to show, or you mightn't believe it even of me. Now what else is it? It's a man-trap and a hand-cuff, the parish stocks and a leg-lock, all in gold and all in one. Now what else is it? It's a wedding ring. Now I'll tell you what I'm a-going to do with it. I'm not a-going to offer this lot for money, but I mean to give it to the next of you beauties that laughs, and I'll pay her a visit to-morrow morning at exactly half after nine o'clock as the chimes go, and I'll take her out for a walk to put up the banns." *She* laughed, and got the ring handed up to her. When I called in the morning, she says, "Oh dear! It's never you and you never mean it?" "It's ever me," says I, "and I am ever yours, and I ever mean it." So we got married, after being put up three times — which, by-the-by, is quite in the Cheap Jack way again, and shows

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once more how the Cheap Jack customs pervade society.

She wasn't a bad wife, but she had a temper. If she could have parted with that one article at a sacrifice, I wouldn't have swopped her away in exchange for any other woman in England. Not that I ever did swop her away, for we lived together till she died, and that was thirteen year. Now my lords and ladies and gentlefolks all, I'll let you into a secret, though you won't believe it. Thirteen year of temper in a Palace would try the worst of you, but thirteen year of temper in a Cart would try the best of you. You are kept so very close to it in a cart, you see. There's thousands of couples among you, getting on like sweet ile upon a whetstone in houses five and six pairs of stairs high, that would go to the Divorce Court in a cart. Whether the jolting makes it worse, I don't undertake to decide, but in a cart it does come home to you and stick to you. Wiolence in a cart is *so* wiolent, and aggrawation in a cart is *so* aggrawating.

We might have had such a pleasant life! A roomy cart, with the large goods hung outside and the bed slung underneath it when on the road, an iron pot and a kettle, a fireplace for the cold weather, a chimney for the smoke, a hanging shelf and a cupboard, a dog, and a horse. What more do you want? You draw off upon a bit of turf in a green lane or by the roadside, you hobble your old horse and turn him grazing, you light your fire upon the ashes of the last visitors, you cook your stew, and you wouldn't call the Emperor of France your father. But have a temper in the cart, flinging language and the hardest goods in stock at

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you, and where are you then? Put a name to your feelings.

My dog knew as well when she was on the turn as I did. Before she broke out, he would give a howl, and bolt. How he knew it, was a mystery to me, but the sure and certain knowledge of it would wake him up out of his soundest sleep, and he would give a howl, and bolt. At such times I wished I was him.

The worst of it was, we had a daughter born to us, and I love children with all my heart. When she was in her furies, she beat the child. This got to be so shocking as the child got to be four or five year old, that I have many a time gone on with my whip over my shoulder, at the old horse's head, sobbing and crying worse than ever little Sophy did. For how could I prevent it? Such a thing is not to be tried with such a temper — in a cart — without coming to a fight. It's in the natural size and formation of a cart to bring it to a fight. And then the poor child got worse terrified than before, as well as worse hurt generally, and her mother made complaints to the next people we lighted on, and the word went round, "Here's a wretch of a Cheap Jack been a beating his wife."

Little Sophy was such a brave child! She grew to be quite devoted to her poor father, though he could do so little to help her. She had a wonderful quantity of shining dark hair, all curling natural about her. It is quite astonishing to me now, that I didn't go tearing mad when I used to see her run from her mother before the cart, and her mother catch her by this hair, and pull her down by it, and beat her.

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Such a brave child I said she was. Ah! with reason.

"Don't you mind next time, father dear," she would whisper to me, with her little face still flushed, and her bright eyes still wet; "if I don't cry out, you may know I am not much hurt. And even if I do cry out, it will only be to get mother to let go and leave off." What I have seen the little spirit bear — for me — without crying out!

Yet in other respects her mother took great care of her. Her clothes were always clean and neat, and her mother was never tired of working at 'em. Such is the inconsistency in things. Our being down in the marsh country in unhealthy weather, I consider the cause of Sophy's taking bad low fever; but however she took it, once she got it she turned away from her mother for evermore, and nothing would persuade her to be touched by her mother's hand. She would shiver and say "No, no, no," when it was offered at, and would hide her face on my shoulder, and hold me tighter round the neck.

The Cheap Jack business had been worse than ever I had known it, what with one thing and what with another (and not least what with railroads, which will cut it all to pieces, I expect at last), and I was run dry of money. For which reason, one night at that period of little Sophy's being so bad, either we must have come to a dead-lock for victuals and drink, or I must have pitched the cart as I did.

I couldn't get the dear child to lie down or leave go of me, and indeed I hadn't the heart to try, so I stepped out on the footboard with her holding round my neck. They all set up a laugh when they see us,

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and one chuckle-headed Joskin (that I hated for it) made the bidding, "tuppence for her!"

"Now, you country boobies," says I, feeling as if my heart was a heavy weight at the end of a broken sash-line, "I give you notice that I am a going to charm the money out of your pockets, and to give you so much more than your money's worth that you'll only persuade yourselves to draw your Saturday night's wages ever again arterwards, by the hopes of meeting me to lay 'em out with, which you never will, and why not? Because I've made my fortune by selling my goods on a large scale for seventy-five per cent less than I give for 'em, and I am consequently to be elevated to the House of Peers next week, by the title of the Duke of Cheap and Markis Jackaloorul. Now let's know what you want to-night, and you shall have it. But first of all, shall I tell you why I have got this little girl round my neck? You don't want to know? Then you shall. She belongs to the Fairies. She's a fortune-teller. She can tell me all about you in a whisper, and can put me up to whether you're a-going to buy a lot or leave it. Now do you want a saw? No, she says you don't, because you're too clumsy to use one. Else here's a saw which would be a lifelong blessing to a handy man, at four shillings, at three and six, at three, at two and six, at two, at eighteenpence. But none of you shall have it at any price, on account of your well-known awkwardness which would make it manslaughter. The same objection applies to this set of three planes which I won't let you have neither, so don't bid for 'em. Now I am a-going to ask her what you do want. (Then I whispered, "Your head burns so, that I am afraid it hurts

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you bad, my pet," and she answered, without opening her heavy eyes, "Just a little, father.") Oh! This little fortune-teller says it's a memorandum-book you want. Then why didn't you mention it? Here it is. Look at it. Two hundred superfine hot-pressed wire-wove papes — if you don't believe me, count 'em — ready ruled for your expenses, an everlastingly-pointed pencil to put 'em down with, a double-bladed penknife to scratch 'em out with, a book of printed tables to calculate your income with, and a camp-stool to sit down upon while you give your mind to it! Stop! And an umbrella to keep the moon off when you give your mind to it on a pitch dark night. Now I won't ask you how much for the lot, but how little? How little are you thinking of? Don't be ashamed to mention it, because my fortune-teller knows already. (Then making believe to whisper, I kissed her, and she kissed me.) Why, she says you're thinking of as little as three and threepence! I couldn't have believed it, even of you, unless she told me. Three and threepence! And a set of printed tables in the lot that'll calculate your income up to forty thousand a year! With an income of forty thousand a year, you grudge three and sixpence. Well then, I'll tell you my opinion. I so despise the threepence, that I'd sooner take three shillings. There. For three shillings, three shillings, three shillings! Gone. Hand 'em over to the lucky man."

As there had been no bid at all, everybody looked about and grinned at everybody, while I touched little Sophy's face and asked her if she felt faint or giddy. "Not very, father. It will soon be over." Then turning from the pretty patient eyes, which were opened

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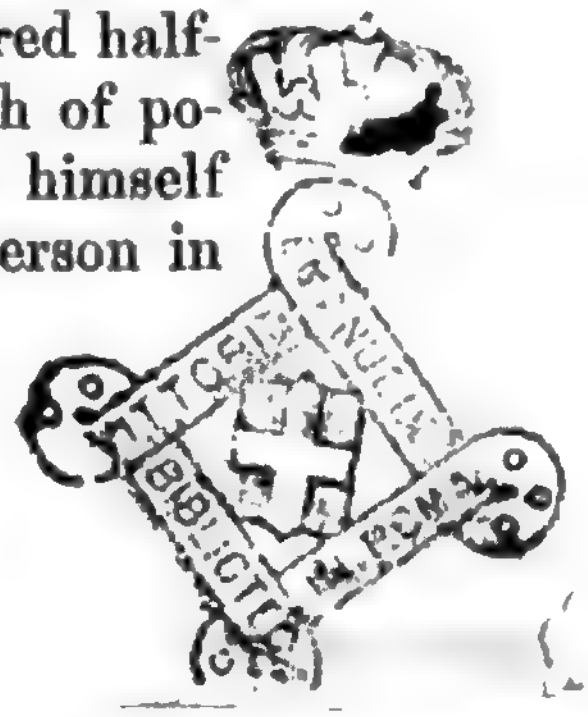
now, and seeing nothing but grins across my lighted grease-pot, I went on again in my Cheap Jack style. "Where's the butcher?" (My sorrowful eye had just caught sight of a fat young butcher on the outside of the crowd.) She says the good luck is the butcher's. "Where is he?" Everybody handed on the blushing butcher to the front, and there was a roar, and the butcher felt himself obliged to put his hand in his pocket and take the lot. The party so picked out, in general does feel obliged to take the lot — good four times out of six. Then we had another lot the counterpart of that one, and sold it sixpence cheaper, which is always wery much enjoyed. Then we had the spectacles. It ain't a special profitable lot, but I put 'em on, and I see what the Chancellor of the Exchequer is going to take off the taxes, and I see what the sweetheart of the young woman in the shawl is doing at home, and I see what the Bishops has got for dinner, and a deal more that seldom fails to fetch 'em up in their spirits; and the better their spirits, the better their bids. Then we had the ladies' lot — the teapot, tea-caddy, glass sugar basin, half a dozen spoons, and caudle-cup — and all the time I was making similar excuses to give a look or two and say a word or two to my poor child. It was while the second ladies' lot was holding 'em enchained that I felt her lift herself a little on my shoulder, to look across the dark street. "What troubles you, darling?" "Nothing troubles me, father. I am not at all troubled. But don't I see a pretty churchyard over there?" "Yes, my dear." "Kiss me twice, dear father, and lay me down to rest upon that churchyard grass so soft and green." I staggered back into the cart with her head dropped on my shoulder, and

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I says to her mother, "Quick. Shut the door! Don't let those laughing people see!" "What's the matter?" she cries. "O, woman, woman," I tells her, "you'll never catch my little Sophy by her hair again, for she has flown away from you!"

Maybe those were harder words than I meant 'em, but from that time forth my wife took to brooding, and would sit in the cart or walk beside it, hours at a stretch, with her arms crossed and her eyes looking on the ground. When her furies took her (which was rather seldomer than before) they took her in a new way, and she banged herself about to that extent that I was forced to hold her. She got none the better for a little drink now and then, and through some years I used to wonder as I plodded along at the old horse's head whether there was many carts upon the road that held so much dreariness as mine, for all my being looked up to as the King of the Cheap Jacks. So sad our lives went on till one summer evening, when as we were coming into Exeter out of the further West of England, we saw a woman beating a child in a cruel manner, who screamed, "Don't beat me! O mother, mother, mother!" Then my wife stopped her ears and ran away like a wild thing, and next day she was found in the river.

Me and my dog were all the company left in the cart now, and the dog learned to give a short bark when they wouldn't bid, and to give another and a nod of his head when I asked him: "Who said half-a-crown? Are you the gentleman, sir, that offered half-a-crown?" He attained to an immense heighth of popularity, and I shall always believe taught himself entirely out of his own head to growl at any person in



the crowd that bid as low as sixpence. But he got to be well on in years, and one night when I was convulsing York with the spectacles, he took a convulsion on his own account upon the very footboard by me, and it finished him.

Being naturally of a tender turn, I had dreadful lonely feelings on me arter this. I conquered 'em at selling times, having a reputation to keep (not to mention keeping myself), but they got me down in private and rolled upon me. That's often the way with us public characters. See us on the footboard, and you'd give pretty well anything you possess to be us. See us off the footboard, and you'd add a trifle to be off your bargain. It was under those circumstances that I come acquainted with a giant. I might have been too high to fall into conversation with him, had it not been for my lonely feelings. For the general rule is, going round the country, to draw the line at dressing up. When a man can't trust his getting a living to his undisguised abilities, you consider him below your sort. And this giant when on view figured as a Roman.

He was a languid young man, which I attribute to the distance betwixt his extremities. He had a little head and less in it, he had weak eyes and weak knees, and altogether you couldn't look at him without feeling that there was greatly too much of him both for his joints and his mind. But he was an amiable though timid young man (his mother let him out, and spent the money), and we come acquainted when he was walking to ease the horse betwixt two fairs. He was called Rinaldo di Velasco, his name being Pickleson.

This giant, otherwise Pickleson, mentioned to me

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under the seal of confidence, that beyond his being a burden to himself, his life was made a burden to him, by the cruelty of his master towards a step-daughter who was deaf and dumb. Her mother was dead, and she had no living soul to take her part, and was used most hard. She travelled with his master's caravan only because there was nowhere to leave her, and this giant otherwise Pickleson did go so far as to believe that his master often tried to lose her. He was such a very languid young man, that I don't know how long it didn't take him to get this story out, but it passed through his defective circulation to his top extremity in course of time.

When I heard this account from the giant otherwise Pickleson, and likewise that the poor girl had beautiful long dark hair, and was often pulled down by it and beaten, I couldn't see the giant through what stood in my eyes. Having wiped 'em, I give him sixpence (for he was kept as short as he was long), and he laid it out in two threepennorths of gin-and-water, which so brisked him up, that he sang the Favourite Comic of Shivery Shakey, ain't it cold. A popular effect which his master had tried every other means to get out of him as a Roman, wholly in vain.

His master's name was Mim, a wery hoarse man and I knew him to speak to. I went to that Fair as a mere civilian, leaving the cart outside the town, and I looked about the back of the vans while the performing was going on, and at last sitting dozing against a muddy cart-wheel, I come upon the poor girl who was deaf and dumb. At the first look I might almost have judged that she had escaped from the Wild Beast Show, but at the second I thought better

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of her, and thought that if she was more cared for and more kindly used she would be like my child. She was just the same age that my own daughter would have been, if her pretty head had not fell down upon my shoulder that unfortunate night.

To cut it short, I spoke confidential to Mim while he was beating the gong outside betwixt two lots of Pickleson's publics, and I put it to him, "She lies heavy on your own hands; what'll you take for her?" Mim was a most ferocious swearer. Suppressing that part of his reply, which was much the longest part, his reply was, "A pair of braces." "Now I'll tell you," says I, "what I'm a going to do with you. I'm a going to fetch you half a dozen pair of the primest braces in the cart, and then to take her away with me." Says Mim (again ferocious), "I'll believe it when I've got the goods, and no sooner." I made all the haste I could, lest he should think twice of it, and the bargain was completed, which Pickleson he was thereby so relieved in his mind that he come out at his little back door, longways like a serpent, and give us Shivery Shakey in a whisper among the wheels at parting.

It was happy days for both of us when Sophy and me began to travel in the cart. I at once give her the name of Sophy, to put her ever towards me in the attitude of my own daughter. We soon made out to begin to understand one another through the goodness of the Heavens, when she knowed that I meant true and kind by her. In a very little time she was wonderful fond of me. You have no idea what it is to have any body wonderful fond of you, unless you have been got down and rolled upon by the lonely feelings

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that I have mentioned as having once got the better of me.

You'd have laughed — or the rewerse — it's according to your disposition — if you could have seen me trying to teach Sophy. At first I was helped — you'd never guess by what — mile-stones. I got some large alphabets in a box, all the letters separate on bits of bone, and say we was going to WINDSOR, I give her those letters in that order, and then at every milestone I showed her those same letters in that same order again, and pointed towards the abode of royalty. Another time I give her C A R T, and then chalked the same upon the cart. Another time I give her D O C T O R M A R I G O L D, and hung a corresponding inscription outside my waistcoat. People that met us might stare a bit and laugh, but what did *I* care if she caught the idea? She caught it after long patience and trouble, and then we did begin to get on swimmingly, I believe you! At first she was a little given to consider me the cart, and the cart the abode of royalty, but that soon wore off.

We had our signs, too, and they was hundreds in number. Sometimes, she would sit looking at me and considering hard how to communicate with me about something fresh — how to ask me what she wanted explained — and then she was (or I thought she was; what does it signify?) so like my child with those years added to her, that I half believed it was herself, trying to tell me where she had been to up in the skies, and what she had seen since that unhappy night when she flied away. She had a pretty face, and now that there was no one to drag at her bright dark hair and it was all in order, there was a something touching in her

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looks that made the cart most peaceful and most quiet, though not at all melancolly. [N.B. In the Cheap Jack patter, we generally sound it, lemonjolly, and it gets a laugh.]

The way she learnt to understand any look of mine was truly surprising. When I sold of a night, she would sit in the cart unseen by them outside, and would give a eager look into my eyes when I looked in, and would hand me straight the precise article or articles I wanted. And then she would clap her hands and laugh for joy. And as for me, seeing her so bright, and remembering what she was when I first lighted on her, starved and beaten and ragged, leaning asleep against the muddy cart-wheel, it give me such heart that I gained a greater heighth of reputation than ever, and I put Pickleson down (by the name of Mim's Travelling Giant otherwise Pickleson) for a fypunnote in my will.

This happiness went on in the cart till she was sixteen year old. By which time I began to feel not satisfied that I had done my whole duty by her, and to consider that she ought to have better teaching than I could give her. It drew a many tears on both sides when I commenced explaining my views to her, but what's right is right and you can't neither by tears nor laughter do away with its character.

So I took her hand in mine, and I went with her one day to the Deaf and Dumb Establishment in London, and when the gentleman come to speak to us, I says to him: "Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you sir. I am nothing but a Cheap Jack, but of late years I have laid by for a rainy day notwithstanding. This is my only daughter (adopted) and you can't produce a deafer nor a dumber. Teach her the most that can be taught

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her, in the shortest separation that can be named — state the figure for it — and I am game to put the money down. I won't bate you a single farthing sir, but I'll put down the money here and now, and I'll thankfully throw you in a pound to take it. There!" The gentleman smiled, and then, "Well, well," says he, "I must first know what she has learnt already. How do you communicate with her?" Then I showed him, and she wrote in printed writing many names of things and so forth, and we held some sprightly conversation, Sophy and me, about a little story in a book which the gentleman showed her and which she was able to read. "This is most extraordinary," says the gentleman; "is it possible that you have been her only teacher?" "I have been her only teacher, sir," I says, "besides herself." "Then," says the gentleman, and more acceptable words was never spoke to me, "you're a clever fellow, and a good fellow." This he makes known to Sophy, who kisses his hands, claps her own, and laughs and cries upon it.

We saw the gentleman four times in all, and when he took down my name and asked how in the world it ever chanced to be Doctor, it come out that he was own nephew by the sister's side, if you'll believe me, to the very Doctor that I was called after. This made our footing still easier, and he says to me:

"Now Marigold, tell me what more do you want your adopted daughter to know?"

"I want her sir to be cut off from the world as little as can be, considering her deprivations, and therefore to be able to read whatever is wrote, with perfect ease and pleasure."

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"My good fellow," urges the gentleman, opening his eyes wide, "why *I* can't do that myself!"

I took his joke and give him a laugh (knowing by experience how flat you fall without it) and I mended my words accordingly.

"What do you mean to do with her afterwards?" asks the gentleman, with a sort of a doubtful eye. "To take her about the country?"

"In the cart sir, but only in the cart. She will live a private life, you understand, in the cart. I should never think of bringing her infirmities before the public. I wouldn't make a show of her, for any money."

The gentleman nodded and seemed to approve.

"Well," says he, "can you part with her for two years?"

"To do her that good — yes, sir."

"There's another question," says the gentleman, looking towards her: "Can she part with you for two years?"

I don't know that it was a harder matter of itself (for the other was hard enough to me), but it was harder to get over. However, she was pacified to it at last, and the separation betwixt us was settled. How it cut up both of us when it took place, and when I left her at the door in the dark of an evening, I don't tell. But I know this: — remembering that night, I shall never pass that same establishment without a heart-ache and a swelling in the throat, and I couldn't put you up the best of lots in sight of it with my usual spirit — no, not even the gun, nor the pair of spectacles — for five hundred pound reward from the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and throw in the

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honour of putting my legs under his mahogany arterwards.

Still, the loneliness that followed in the cart was not the old loneliness, because there was a term put to it however long to look forward to, and because I could think, when I was anyways down, that she belonged to me and I belonged to her. Always planning for her coming back, I bought in a few months' time another cart, and what do you think I planned to do with it? I'll tell you. I planned to fit it up with shelves, and books for her reading, and to have a seat in it where I could sit and see her read, and think that I had been her first teacher. Not hurrying over the job, I had the fittings knocked together in contriving ways under my own inspection, and here was her bed in a berth with curtains, and there was her reading-table, and here was her writing-desk, and elsewhere was her books in rows upon rows, picters and no picters, bindings and no bindings, gilt-edged and plain, just as I could pick 'em up for her in lots up and down the country, North and South and West and East, Winds liked best and winds liked least, Here and there and gone astray, Over the hills and far away. And when I had got together pretty well as many books as the cart would neatly hold, a new scheme come into my head which, as it turned out, kept my time and attention a good deal employed and helped me over the two years stile.

Without being of an awaricious temper, I like to be the owner of things. I shouldn't wish, for instance, to go partners with yourself in the Cheap Jack cart. It's not that I mistrust you, but that I'd rather know it was mine. Similarly, very likely you'd rather know

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it was yours. Well! A kind of a jealousy began to creep into my mind when I reflected that all those books would have been read by other people long before they was read by her. It seemed to take away from her being the owner of 'em like. In this way, the question got into my head: — Couldn't I have a book new-made express for her, which she should be the first to read?

It pleased me, that thought did, and as I never was a man to let a thought sleep (you must wake up all the whole family of thoughts you've got and burn their nightcaps, or you won't do in the cheap Jack line), I set to work at it. Considering that I was in the habit of changing so much about the country, and that I should have to find out a literary character here to make a deal with, and another literary character there to make a deal with, as opportunities presented, I hit on the plan that this same book should be a general miscellaneous lot — like the razors, flat-iron, chronometer watch, dinner plates, rolling-pin, and looking-glass — and shouldn't be offered as a single indiwidual article like the spectacles or the gun. When I had come to that conclusion, I come to another, which shall likewise be yours.

Often had I regretted that she never had heard me on the footboard, and that she never could hear me. It ain't that *I* am vain, but that *you* don't like to put your own light under a bushel. What's the worth of your reputation, if you can't convey the reason for it to the person you most wish to value it? Now I'll put it to you. Is it worth sixpence, fippence, fourpence, threepence, twopence, a penny, a halfpenny, a farthing? No, it ain't. Not worth a farthing. Very well then.

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My conclusion was, that I would begin her book with some account of myself. So that, through reading a specimen or two of me on the footboard, she might form an idea of my merits there. I was aware that I couldn't do myself justice. A man can't write his eye (at least *I* don't know how to), nor yet can a man write his voice, nor the rate of his talk, nor the quickness of his action, nor his general spicy way. But he can write his turns of speech, when he is a public speaker — and indeed I have heard that he very often does, before he speaks 'em.

Well! Having formed that resolution, then come the question of a name. How did I hammer that hot iron into shape? This way. The most difficult explanation I had ever had with her was, how I come to be called Doctor, and yet was no Doctor. After all, I felt that I had failed of getting it correctly into her mind, with my utmost pains. But trusting to her improvement in the two years, I thought that I might trust to her understanding it when she should come to read it as put down by my own hand. Then I thought I would try a joke with her and watch how it took, by which of itself I might fully judge of her understanding it. We had first discovered the mistake we had dropped into, through her having asked me to prescribe for her when she had supposed me to be a Doctor in a medical point of view, so thinks I, "Now, if I give this book the name of my Prescriptions, and if she catches the idea that my only Prescriptions are for her amusement and interest — to make her laugh in a pleasant way, or to make her cry in a pleasant way — it will be a delightful proof to both of us that we have got over our difficulty. It fell out to absolute perfection. For

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when she saw the book, as I had it got up — the printed and pressed book — lying on her desk in her cart, and saw the title, DOCTOR MARIGOLD'S PRESCRIPTIONS, she looked at me for a moment with astonishment, then fluttered the leaves, then broke out a laughing in the charmingest way, then felt her pulse and shook her head, then turned the pages pretending to read them most attentive, then kissed the book to me, and put it to her bosom with both her hands. I never was better pleased in all my life!

But let me not anticipate. (I take that expression out of a lot of romances I bought for her. I never opened a single one of 'em — and I have opened many — but I found the romancer saying "let me not anticipate." Which being so, I wonder why he did anticipate, or who asked him to it.) Let me not, I say, anticipate. This same book took up all my spare time. It was no play to get the other articles together in the general miscellaneous lot, but when it come to my own article! There! I couldn't have believed the blotting, nor yet the buckling to at it, nor the patience over it. Which again is like the footboard. The public have no idea.

At last it was done, and the two years' time was gone after all the other time before it, and where it's all gone to, Who knows? The new cart was finished — yellow outside, relieved with wermillion and brass fittings — the old horse was put in it, a new 'un and a boy being laid on for the Cheap Jack cart — and I cleaned myself up to go and fetch her. Bright cold weather it was, cart-chimneys smoking, carts pitched private on a piece of waste ground over at Wandsworth, where you may see 'em from the Sou' Western Railway

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when not upon the road. (Look out of the right-hand window going down.)

"Marigold," says the gentleman, giving his hand hearty, "I am very glad to see you."

"Yet I have my doubts, sir," says I, "if you can be half as glad to see me, as I am to see you."

"The time has appeared so long; has it, Marigold?"

"I won't say that, sir, considering its real length; but ——"

"What a start, my good fellow!"

Ah! I should think it was! Grown such a woman, so pretty, so intelligent, so expressive! I knew then that she must be really like my child, or I could never have known her, standing quiet by the door.

"You are affected," says the gentleman in a kindly manner.

"I feel, sir," says I, "that I am but a rough chap in a sleeved waistcoat."

"*I* feel," says the gentleman, "that it was you who raised her from misery and degradation, and brought her into communication with her kind. But why do we converse alone together, when we can converse so well with her? Address her in your own way."

"I am such a rough chap in a sleeved waistcoat, sir," says I, "and she is such a graceful woman, and she stands so quiet at the door!"

"Try if she moves at the old sign," says the gentleman.

They had got it up together o' purpose to please me! For when I give her the old sign, she rushed to my feet, and dropped upon her knees, holding up her hands to me with pouring tears of love and joy; and

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when I took her hands and lifted her, she clasped me round the neck and lay there; and I don't know what a fool I didn't make of myself, until we all three settled down into talking without sound, as if there was a something soft and pleasant spread over the whole world for us.

Now I'll tell you what I am a going to do with you. I am a going to offer you the general miscellaneous lot, her own book, never read by anybody else but me, added to and completed by me after her first reading of it, eight-and-forty printed pages, six-and-ninety columns, Whiting's own work, Beaufort House to wit, thrown off by the steam-ingine, best of paper, beautiful green wrapper, folded like clean linen come home from the clear-starcher's, and so exquisitely stitched that, regarded as a piece of needlework alone it's better than the sampler of a seamstress undergoing a Competitive Examination for Starvation before the Civil Service Commissioners — and I offer the lot for what? For eight pound? Not so much. For six pound? Less. For four pound? Why, I hardly expect you to believe me, but that's the sum. Four pound! The stitching alone cost half as much again. Here's forty-eight original pages, ninety-six original columns, for four pound. You want more for the money? Take it. Three whole pages of advertisements of thrilling interest thrown in for nothing. Read 'em and believe 'em. More? My best of wishes for your merry Christmases and your happy New Years, your long lives and your true prosperities. Worth twenty pound good if they are delivered as I send them. Remember! Here's a final prescription added, "To be taken for life," which

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will tell you how the cart broke down, and where the journey ended. You think Four Pound too much? And still you think so? Come! I'll tell you what then. Say Four Pence, and keep the secret.

II.

NOT TO BE TAKEN AT BED-TIME.

This is the legend of a house called the Devil's Inn, standing in the heather on the top of the Connemara mountains, in a shallow valley hollowed between five peaks. Tourists sometimes come in sight of it on September evenings; a crazy and weather-stained apparition, with the sun glaring at it angrily between the hills, and striking its shattered window-panes. Guides are known to shun it, however.

The house was built by a stranger, who came no one knew whence, and whom the people nicknamed Coll Dhu (Black Coll), because of his sullen bearing and solitary habits. His dwelling they called the Devil's Inn, because no tired traveller had ever been asked to rest under its roof, nor friend known to cross its threshold. No one bore him company in his retreat but a wizen-faced old man, who shunned the good-morrow of the trudging peasant when he made occasional excursions to the nearest village for provisions for himself and master, and who was as secret as a stone concerning all the antecedents of both.

For the first year of their residence in the country, there had been much speculation as to who they were, and what they did with themselves up there among the clouds and eagles. Some said that Coll Dhu was a

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scion of the old family from whose hands the surrounding lands had passed; and that, embittered by poverty and pride, he had come to bury himself in solitude and brood over his misfortunes. Others hinted of crime, and flight from another country; others again whispered of those who were cursed from their birth, and could never smile, nor yet make friends with a fellow-creature till the day of their death. But when two years had passed, the wonder had somewhat died out, and Coll Dhu was little thought of, except when a herd looking for sheep crossed the track of a big dark man walking the mountains gun in hand, to whom he did not dare say "Lord save you!" or when a housewife rocking her cradle of a winter's night, crossed herself as a gust of storm thundered over her cabin-roof, with the exclamation, "Oh, then, it's Coll Dhu that has enough o' the fresh air about his head up there this night, the creature!"

Coll Dhu had lived thus in his solitude for some years, when it became known that Colonel Blake, the new lord of the soil, was coming to visit the country. By climbing one of the peaks encircling his eyrie, Coll could look sheer down a mountain-side, and see in miniature beneath him, a grey old dwelling with ivied chimneys and weather-slated walls, standing amongst straggling trees and grim warlike rocks, that gave it the look of a fortress, gazing out to the Atlantic for ever with the eager eyes of all its windows, as if demanding perpetually, "What tidings from the New World?"

He could see now masons and carpenters crawling about below, like ants in the sun, overrunning the old house from base to chimney, daubing here and knock-

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ing there, tumbling down walls that looked to Coll, up among the clouds, like a handful of jackstones, and building up others that looked like the toy fences in a child's Farm. Throughout several months he must have watched the busy ants at their task of breaking and mending again, disfiguring and beautifying; but when all was done he had not the curiosity to stride down and admire the handsome paneling of the new billiard-room, nor yet the fine view which the enlarged bay-window in the drawing-room commanded of the watery highway to Newfoundland.

Deep summer was melting into autumn, and the amber streaks of decay were beginning to creep out and trail over the ripe purple of moor and mountain, when Colonel Blake, his only daughter, and a party of friends, arrived in the country. The grey house below was alive with gaiety, but Coll Dhu no longer found an interest in observing it from his eyrie. When he watched the sun rise or set, he chose to ascend some crag that looked on no human habitation. When he sallied forth on his excursions, gun in hand, he set his face towards the most isolated wastes, dipping into the loneliest valleys, and scaling the nakedest ridges. When he came by chance within call of other excursionists, gun in hand he plunged into the shade of some hollow, and avoided an encounter. Yet it was fated, for all that, that he and Colonel Blake should meet.

Towards the evening of one bright September day, the wind changed, and in half an hour the mountains were wrapped in a thick blinding mist. Coll Dhu was far from his den, but so well had he searched these mountains, and inured himself to their climate, that neither storm, rain, nor fog, had power to disturb him.

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But while he stalked on his way, a faint and agonised cry from a human voice reached him through the smothering mist. He quickly tracked the sound, and gained the side of a man who was stumbling along in danger of death at every step.

"Follow me!" said Coll Dhu to this man, and, in an hour's time, brought him safely to the lowlands, and up to the walls of the eager-eyed mansion.

"I am Colonel Blake," said the frank soldier, when, having left the fog behind him, they stood in the starlight under the lighted windows. "Pray tell me quickly to whom I owe my life."

As he spoke, he glanced up at his benefactor, a large man with a sombre sun-burned face.

"Colonel Blake," said Coll Dhu, after a strange pause, "your father suggested to my father to stake his estates at the gaming table. They were staked, and the tempter won. Both are dead; but you and I live, and I have sworn to injure you."

The colonel laughed good humouredly at the uneasy face above him.

"And you began to keep your oath to-night by saving my life?" said he. "Come! I am a soldier, and know how to meet an enemy; but I had far rather meet a friend. I shall not be happy till you have eaten my salt. We have merry-making to-night in honour of my daughter's birthday. Come in and join us?"

Coll Dhu looked at the earth doggedly.

"I have told you," he said, "who and what I am, and I will not cross your threshold."

But at this moment (so runs my story) a French window opened among the flower-beds by which they

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were standing, and a vision appeared which stayed the words on Coll's tongue. A stately girl, clad in white satin, stood framed in the ivied window, with the warm light from within streaming around her richly-moulded figure into the night. Her face was as pale as her gown, her eyes were swimming in tears, but a firm smile sat on her lips as she held out both hands to her father. The light behind her, touched the glistening folds of her dress — the lustrous pearls round her throat — the coronet of blood-red roses which encircled the knotted braids at the back of her head. Satin, pearls, and roses — had Coll Dhu, of the Devil's Inn, never set eyes upon such things before?

Evleen Blake was no nervous tearful miss. A few quick words — "Thank God! you're safe; the rest have been home an hour" — and a tight pressure of her father's fingers between her own jewelled hands, were all that betrayed the uneasiness she had suffered.

"Faith, my love, I owe my life to this brave gentleman!" said the blithe colonel. "Press him to come in and be our guest, Evleen. He wants to retreat to his mountains, and lose himself again in the fog where I found him; or, rather, where he found me! Come, sir" (to Coll), "you must surrender to this fair besieger."

An introduction followed. "Coll Dhu!" murmured Evleen Blake, for she had heard the common tales of him; but with a frank welcome she invited her father's preserver to taste the hospitality of that father's house.

"I beg you to come in, sir," she said; "but for you our gaiety must have been turned into mourning. A shadow will be upon our mirth if our benefactor disdains to join in it."

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With a sweet grace, mingled with a certain hauteur from which she was never free, she extended her white hand to the tall looming figure outside the window; to have it grasped and wrung in a way that made the proud girl's eyes flash their amazement, and the same little hand clench itself in displeasure, when it had hid itself like an outraged thing among the shining folds of her gown. Was this Coll Dhu mad, or rude?

The guest no longer refused to enter, but followed the white figure into a little study where a lamp burned; and the gloomy stranger, the bluff colonel, and the young mistress of the house, were fully discovered to each other's eyes. Evleen glanced at the new comer's dark face, and shuddered with a feeling of indescribable dread and dislike; then, to her father, accounted for the shudder after a popular fashion, saying lightly: "There is some one walking over my grave."

So Coll Dhu was present at Evleen Blake's birthday ball. Here he was, under a roof which ought to have been his own, a stranger, known only by a nickname, shunned and solitary. Here he was, who had lived among the eagles and foxes, lying in wait with a fell purpose, to be revenged on the son of his father's foe for poverty and disgrace, for the broken heart of a dead mother, for the loss of a self-slaughtered father, for the dreary scattering of brothers and sisters. Here he stood, a Samson shorn of his strength; and all because a haughty girl had melting eyes, a winning mouth, and looked radiant in satin and roses.

Peerless where many were lovely, she moved among her friends, trying to be unconscious of the gloomy

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fire of those strange eyes which followed her unwearied-ly wherever she went. And when her father begged her to be gracious to the unsocial guest whom he would fain conciliate, she courteously conducted him to see the new picture-gallery adjoining the drawing-rooms; explained under what odd circumstances the colonel had picked up this little painting or that; using every delicate art her pride would allow to achieve her father's purpose, whilst maintaining at the same time her own personal reserve; trying to divert the guest's oppressive attention from herself to the objects for which she claimed his notice. Coll Dhu followed his conductress and listened to her voice, but what she said mattered nothing; nor did she wring many words of comment or reply from his lips, until they paused in a retired corner where the light was dim, before a window from which the curtain was withdrawn. The sashes were open, and nothing was visible but water; the night Atlantic, with the full moon riding high above a bank of clouds, making silvery tracks outward towards the distance of infinite mystery dividing two worlds. Here the following little scene is said to have been enacted.

"This window of my father's own planning, is it not creditable to his taste?" said the young hostess, as she stood, herself glittering like a dream of beauty, looking on the moonlight.

Coll Dhu made no answer; but suddenly, it is said, asked her for a rose from a cluster of flowers that nestled in the lace on her bosom.

For the second time that night Evleen Blake's eyes flashed with no gentle light. But this man was the saviour of her father. She broke off a blossom, and

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with such good grace, and also with such queen-like dignity as she might assume, presented it to him. Whereupon, not only was the rose seized, but also the hand that gave it, which was hastily covered with kisses.

Then her anger burst upon him.

"Sir," she cried, "if you are a gentleman you must be mad! If you are not mad, then you are not a gentleman!"

"Be merciful," said Coll Dhu; "I love you. My God, I never loved a woman before! Ah!" he cried, as a look of disgust crept over her face, "you hate me. You shuddered the first time your eyes met mine. I love you, and you hate me!"

"I do," cried Evleen, vehemently, forgetting everything but her indignation. "Your presence is like something evil to me. Love me? — your looks poison me. Pray, sir, talk no more to me in this strain."

"I will trouble you no longer," said Coll Dhu. And, stalking to the window, he placed one powerful hand upon the sash, and vaulted from it out of her sight.

Bare-headed as he was, Coll Dhu strode off to the mountains, but not towards his own home. All the remaining dark hours of that night he is believed to have walked the labyrinths of the hills, until dawn began to scatter the clouds with a high wind. Fasting, and on foot from sunrise the morning before, he was then glad enough to see a cabin right in his way. Walking in, he asked for water to drink, and a corner where he might throw himself to rest.

There was a wake in the house, and the kitchen

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was full of people, all wearied out with the night's watch; old men were dozing over their pipes in the chimney-corner, and here and there a woman was fast asleep with her head on a neighbour's knee. All who were awake crossed themselves when Coll Dhu's figure darkened the door, because of his evil name; but an old man of the house invited him in, and offering him milk, and promising him a roasted potato by-and-by, conducted him to a small room off the kitchen, one end of which was strewed with heather, and where there were only two women sitting gossiping over a fire.

"A traveller," said the old man, nodding his head at the women, who nodded back, as if to say "he has the traveller's right." And Coll Dhu flung himself on the heather, in the furthest corner of the narrow room.

The women suspended their talk for a while; but presently, guessing the intruder to be asleep, resumed it in voices above a whisper. There was but a patch of window with the grey dawn behind it, but Coll could see the figures by the firelight over which they bent: an old woman sitting forward with her withered hands extended to the embers, and a girl reclining against the hearth wall, with her healthy face, bright eyes, and crimson draperies, glowing by turns in the flickering blaze.

"I do' know," said the girl, "but it's the quarest marriage iver I h'ard of. Sure it's not three weeks since he tould right an' left that he hated her like poison!"

"Whist, asthoreen!" said the colliagh, bending forward confidentially; "throth an' we all know that o'

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him. But what could he do, the crature! When she put the burragh-bos on him!"

"The *what?*" asked the girl.

"Then the burragh-bos machree-o? That's the spanchel o' death, avourneen; an' well she has him tethered to her now, bad luck to her!"

The old woman rocked herself and stifled the Irish cry breaking from her wrinkled lips by burying her face in her cloak.

"But what is it?" asked the girl, eagerly. "What's the burragh-bos, anyways, an' where did she get it?"

"Och, och! it's not fit for comin' over to young ears, but cuggir (whisper), acushla! It's a sthrip o' the skin o' a corpse, peeled from the crown o' the head to the heel, without crack or split, or the charrm's broke; an' that, rowled up, an' put on a sthring roun' the neck o' the wan that's cowld by the wan that wants to be loved. An' sure enough it puts the fire in their hearts, hot an' sthrong, afore twinty-four hours is gone."

The girl had started from her lazy attitude, and gazed at her companion with eyes dilated by horror.

"Marciful Saviour!" she cried. "Not a sowl on airth would bring the curse out o' heaven by sich a black doin'!"

"Aisy, Biddeen alanna! an' there's wan that does it, an' isn't the divil. Arrah, asthoreen, did ye niver hear tell o' Pexie na Pishrogie, that lives betune two hills o' Maam Turk?"

"I h'ard o' her," said the girl, breathlessly.

"Well, sorra bit lie, but it's hersel' that does it. She'll do it for money any day. Sure they hunted her from the graveyard o' Salruck, where she had the dead

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raised; an' glory be to God! they would ha' murthered her, only they missed her thracks, an' couldn't bring it home to her afther."

"Whist, a-wauher" (my mother), said the girl; "here's the thraveller gettin' up to set off on his road again! Och, then, it's the short rest he tuk, the sowl!"

It was enough for Coll, however. He had got up, and now went back to the kitchen, where the old man had caused a dish of potatoes to be roasted, and earnestly pressed his visitor to sit down and eat of them. This Coll did readily; having recruited his strength by a meal, he betook himself to the mountains again, just as the rising sun was flashing among the waterfalls, and sending the night mists drifting down the glens. By sundown the same evening he was striding over the hills of Maam Turk, asking of herds his way to the cabin of one Pexie na Pishrogie.

In a hovel on a brown desolate heath, with scared-looking hills flying off into the distance on every side, he found Pexie: a yellow-faced hag, dressed in a dark-red blanket, with elf-locks of coarse black hair protruding from under an orange kerchief swathed round her wrinkled jaws. She was bending over a pot upon her fire, where herbs were simmering, and she looked up with an evil glance when Coll Dhu darkened her door.

"The burragh-bos is it her honour wants?" she asked, when he had made known his errand. "Ay, ay; but the arighad, the arighad (money) for Pexie. The burragh-bos is ill to get."

"I will pay," said Coll Dhu, laying a sovereign on the bench before her.

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The witch sprang upon it, and chuckling, bestowed on her visitor a glance which made even Coll Dhu shudder.

"Her honour is a fine king," she said, "an' her is fit to get the burragh-bos. Ha! ha! her sall get the burragh-bos from Pexie. But the arighad is not enough. More, more!"

She stretched out her claw-like hand, and Coll dropped another sovereign into it. Whereupon she fell into more horrible convulsions of delight.

"Hark ye!" cried Coll. "I have paid you well, but if your infernal charm does not work, I will have you hunted for a witch!"

"Work!" cried Pexie, rolling up her eyes. "If Pexie's charrm not work, then her honour come back here an' carry these bits o' mountain away on her back. Ay, her will work. If the colleen hate her honour like the old diaoul hersel', still an' withal her will love her honour like her own white sowl afore the sun sets or rises. That, (with a furtive leer,) or the colleen dhas go wild mad afore wan hour."

"Hag!" returned Coll Dhu; "the last part is a hellish invention of your own. I heard nothing of madness. If you want more money, speak out, but play none of your hideous tricks on me."

The witch fixed her cunning eyes on him, and took her cue at once from his passion.

"Her honour guess thrue," she simpered; "it is only the little bit more arighad poor Pexie want."

Again the skinny hand was extended. Coll Dhu shrank from touching it, and threw his gold upon the table.

"King, king!" chuckled Pexie. "Her honour is a

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grand king. Her honour is fit to get the burragh-bos. The colleen dhas sall love her like her own white sowl. Ha, ha!"

"When shall I get it?" asked Coll Dhu, impatiently.

"Her honour sall come back to Pexie in so many days, do-deag (twelve), so many days, fur that the burragh-bos is hard to get. The lonely graveyard is far away, an' the dead man is hard to raise ——"

"Silence!" cried Coll Dhu; "not a word more. I will have your hideous charm, but what it is, or where you get it, I will not know."

Then, promising to come back in twelve days, he took his departure. Turning to look back when a little way across the heath, he saw Pexie gazing after him, standing on her black hill in relief against the lurid flames of the dawn, seeming to his dark imagination like a fury with all hell at her back.

At the appointed time Coll Dhu got the promised charm. He sewed it with perfumes into a cover of cloth of gold, and slung it to a fine-wrought chain. Lying in a casket which had once held the jewels of Coll's broken-hearted mother, it looked a glittering bauble enough. Meantime the people of the mountains were cursing over their cabin fires, because there had been another unholy raid upon their graveyard, and were banding themselves to hunt the criminal down.

A fortnight passed. How or where could Coll Dhu find an opportunity to put the charm round the neck of the colonel's proud daughter? More gold was dropped into Pexie's greedy claw, and then she promised to assist him in his dilemma.

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Next morning the witch dressed herself in decent garb, smoothed her elf-locks under a snowy cap, smoothed the evil wrinkles out of her face, and with a basket on her arm locked the door of the hovel, and took her way to the lowlands. Pexie seemed to have given up her disreputable calling for that of a simple mushroom-gatherer. The housekeeper at the grey house bought poor Muireade's mushrooms of her every morning. Every morning she left unfailingly a nosegay of wild flowers for Miss Evleen Blake, "God bless her! She had never seen the darling young lady with her own two longing eyes, but sure hadn't she heard tell of her sweet purty face, miles away!" And at last, one morning, whom should she meet but Miss Evleen herself returning alone from a ramble. Whereupon poor Muireade "made bold" to present her flowers in person.

"Ah," said Evleen, "it is you who leave me the flowers every morning? They are very sweet."

Muireade had sought her only for a look at her beautiful face. And now that she had seen it, as bright as the sun, and as fair as the lily, she would take up her basket and go away contented. Yet she lingered a little longer.

"My lady never walk up big mountain?" said Pexie.

"No," Evleen said, laughing; she feared she could not walk up a mountain.

"Ah yes; my lady ought to go, with more gran' ladies an' gentlemen, ridin' on purty little donkeys, up the big mountain. Oh, gran' things up big mountain for my lady to see!"

Thus she set to work, and kept her listener en-

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chained for an hour, while she related wonderful stories of those upper regions. And as Evleen looked up to the burly crowns of the hills, perhaps she thought there might be sense in this wild old woman's suggestion. It ought to be a grand world up yonder.

Be that as it may, it was not long after this when Coll Dhu got notice that a party from the grey house would explore the mountains next day; that Evleen Blake would be of the number; and that he, Coll, must prepare to house and refresh a crowd of weary people, who in the evening should be brought, hungry and faint, to his door. The simple mushroom gatherer should be discovered laying in her humble stock among the green places between the hills, should volunteer to act as guide to the party, should lead them far out of their way through the mountains and up and down the most toilsome ascents and across dangerous places; to escape safely from which, the servants should be told to throw away the baskets of provisions which they carried.

Coll Dhu was not idle. Such a feast was set forth, as had never been spread so near the clouds before. We are told of wonderful dishes furnished by unwholesome agency, and from a place believed much hotter than is necessary for purposes of cookery. We are told also how Coll Dhu's barren chambers were suddenly hung with curtains of velvet, and with fringes of gold; how the blank white walls glowed with delicate colours and gilding; how gems of pictures sprang into sight between the panels; how the tables blazed with plate and gold, and glittered with the rarest glass; how such wines flowed, as the guests had never tasted; how servants in the richest livery, amongst whom the

wizen-faced old man was a mere nonentity, appeared, and stood ready to carry in the wonderful dishes, at whose extraordinary fragrance the eagles came pecking to the windows, and the foxes drew near the walls, snuffing. Sure enough, in all good time, the weary party came within sight of the Devil's Inn, and Coll Dhu sallied forth to invite them across his lonely threshold. Colonel Blake (to whom Evleen, in her delicacy, had said no word of the solitary's strange behaviour to herself) hailed his appearance with delight, and the whole party sat down to Coll's banquet in high good humour. Also, it is said, in much amazement at the magnificence of the mountain recluse.

All went in to Coll's feast, save Evleen Blake, who remained standing on the threshold of the outer door; weary, but unwilling to rest there; hungry, but unwilling to eat there. Her white cambric dress was gathered on her arms, crushed and sullied with the toils of the day; her bright cheek was a little sunburned; her small dark head with its braids a little tossed, was bared to the mountain air and the glory of the sinking sun; her hands were loosely tangled in the strings of her hat; and her foot sometimes tapped the threshold stone. So she was seen.

The peasants tell that Coll Dhu and her father came praying her to enter, and that the magnificent servants brought viands to the threshold; but no step would she move inward, no morsel would she taste.

"Poison, poison!" she murmured, and threw the food in handfuls to the foxes, who were snuffing on the heath.

But it was different when Muireade, the kindly old woman, the simple mushroom-gatherer, with all the

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wicked wrinkles smoothed out of her face, came to the side of the hungry girl, and coaxingly presented a savoury mess of her own sweet mushrooms, served on a common earthen platter.

"An' darlin', my lady, poor Muireade her cook them hersel', an' no thing o' this house touch them or look at poor Muireade's mushrooms."

Then Evleen took the platter and ate a delicious meal. Scarcely was it finished when a heavy drowsiness fell upon her, and, unable to sustain herself on her feet, she presently sat down upon the door-stone. Leaning her head against the framework of the door, she was soon in a deep sleep, or trance. So she was found.

"Whimsical, obstinate little girl!" said the colonel, putting his hand on the beautiful slumbering head. And taking her in his arms, he carried her into a chamber which had been (say the story-tellers) nothing but a bare and sorry closet in the morning, but which was now fitted up with Oriental splendour. And here on a luxurious couch she was laid, with a crimson coverlet wrapping her feet. And here in the tempered light coming through jewelled glass, where yesterday had been a coarse rough-hung window, her father looked his last upon her lovely face.

The colonel returned to his host and friends, and by-and-by the whole party sallied forth to see the after-glare of a fierce sunset swathing the hills in flames. It was not until they had gone some distance that Coll Dhu remembered to go back and fetch his telescope. He was not long absent. But he was absent long enough to enter that glowing chamber with a stealthy step, to throw a light chain around the neck

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of the sleeping girl, and to slip among the folds of her dress the hideous glittering burragh-bos.

After he had gone away again, Pexie came stealing to the door, and, opening it a little, sat down on the mat outside, with her cloak wrapped round her. An hour passed, and Evleen Blake still slept, her breathing scarcely stirring the deadly bauble on her breast. After that, she began to murmur and moan, and Pexie pricked up her ears. Presently a sound in the room told that the victim was awake and had risen. Then Pexie put her face to the aperture of the door and looked in, gave a howl of dismay, and fled from the house, to be seen in that country no more.

The light was fading among the hills, and the ramblers were returning towards the Devil's Inn, when a group of ladies who were considerably in advance of the rest, met Evleen Blake advancing towards them on the heath, with her hair disordered as by sleep, and no covering on her head. They noticed something bright, like gold, shifting and glancing with the motion of her figure. There had been some jesting among them about Evleen's fancy for falling asleep on the door-step instead of coming in to dinner, and they advanced laughing, to rally her on the subject. But she stared at them in a strange way, as if she did not know them, and passed on. Her friends were rather offended, and commented on her fantastic humour; only one looked after her, and got laughed at by her companions for expressing uneasiness on the wilful young lady's account.

So they kept their way, and the solitary figure went fluttering on, the white robe blushing, and the fatal burragh-bos glittering in the reflexion from the

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sky. A hare crossed her path, and she laughed out loudly, and clapping her hands, sprang after it. Then she stopped and asked questions of the stones, striking them with her open palm because they would not answer. (An amazed little herd sitting behind a rock, witnessed these strange proceedings.) By-and-by she began to call after the birds, in a wild shrill way, startling the echoes of the hills as she went along. A party of gentlemen returning by a dangerous path, heard the unusual sound and stopped to listen.

"What is that?" asked one.

"A young eagle," said Coll Dhu, whose face had become livid; "they often give such cries."

"It was uncommonly like a woman's voice!" was the reply; and immediately another wild note rang towards them from the rocks above: a bare saw-like ridge, shelving away to some distance ahead, and projecting one hungry tooth over an abyss. A few more moments and they saw Evleen Blake's light figure fluttering out towards this dizzy point.

"My Evleen!" cried the colonel, recognising his daughter, "she is mad to venture on such a spot!"

"Mad!" repeated Coll Dhu. And then dashed off to the rescue with all the might and swiftness of his powerful limbs.

When he drew near her, Evleen had almost reached the verge of the terrible rock. Very cautiously he approached her, his object being to seize her in his strong arms before she was aware of his presence, and carry her many yards away from the spot of danger. But in a fatal moment Evleen turned her head and saw him. One wild ringing cry of hate and horror, which startled the very eagles and scattered a flight of cur-

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lews above her head, broke from her lips. A step backward brought her within a foot of death.

One desperate though wary stride, and she was struggling in Coll's embrace. One glance in her eyes, and he saw that he was striving with a mad woman. Back, back, she dragged him, and he had nothing to grasp by. The rock was slippery and his shod feet would not cling to it. Back, back! A hoarse panting, a dire swinging to and fro; and then the rock was standing naked against the sky, no one was there, and Coll Dhu and Evleen Blake lay shattered far below.

III.

TO BE TAKEN AT THE DINNER-TABLE.

Does any one know who gives the names to our streets? Does any one know who invents the mottoes which are inserted in the cracker-papers, along with the sugar-plums? — I don't envy him his intellectual faculties, by-the-by, and I suspect him to be the individual who translates the books of the foreign operas. Does any one know who introduces the new dishes, Kromeski's, and such-like? Does any one know who is responsible for new words, such as shunt and thud, shimmer, ping (denoting the crack of the rifle), and many others? Does any one know who has obliged us to talk for ever about "fraternising" and "cropping up?" Does any one know the Sage to whom perfumers apply when they have invented a shaving-soap, or hair-wash, and who furnishes the trade with such names for their wares as Rypophagon, Euxesis, Depilatory,

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Bostrakeison? Does any one know who makes the riddles?

To the last question — only — I answer, Yes; *I* know.

In a certain year, which, I don't mind mentioning may be looked upon as included in the present century, I was a little boy — a sharp little boy, though I say it, and a skinny little boy. The two qualities not unfrequently go together. I will not mention what my age was at the time, but I was at school not far from London, and I was of an age when it is customary, or *was* customary, to wear a jacket and frill.

In riddles, I had at that early age a profound and solemn joy. To the study of those problems, I was beyond measure addicted, and in the collecting of them I was diligent in the extreme. It was the custom at the time for certain periodicals to give the question of a conundrum in one number, and the answer in the next. There was an interval of seven days and nights between the propounding of the question, and the furnishing of the reply. What a time was that for me! I sought the solution of the enigma, off and on (generally on), during the leisure hours of the week (no wonder I was skinny!), and sometimes, I am proud to remember, I became acquainted with the answer before the number containing it reached me from the official source. There was another kind of puzzle which used to appear when my sharp and skinny boyhood was at its sharpest and skinniest, by which I was much more perplexed than by conundrums or riddles conveyed in mere words. I speak of what may be called symbolical riddles — rebus is, I believe, their true designation — little squalid woodcuts representing all sorts of impos-

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sible objects huddled together in incongruous disorder; letters of the alphabet, at times, and even occasionally fragments of words, being introduced here and there, to add to the general confusion. Thus you would have: a Cupid mending a pen, a gridiron, the letter x, a bar of music, p. u. g. and a fife — you would have these presented to you on a certain Saturday, with the announcement that on the following Saturday there would be issued an explanation of the mysterious and terrific jumble. That explanation would come, but with it new difficulties worse than the former. A birdcage, a setting sun (not like), the word "snip," a cradle, and some quadruped to which it would have puzzled Buffon himself to give a name. With these problems I was not successful, never having solved but one in my life, as will presently appear. Neither was I good at poetical riddles, in parts — slightly forced — as "My first is a boa-constrictor, My second's a Roman lictor, My third is a Dean and Chipter, And my whole goes always on tip-ter." These were too much for me.

I remember on one occasion accidentally meeting with a publication in which there was a rebus better executed than those to which I had been accustomed, and which mystified me greatly. First of all there was the letter A; then came a figure of a clearly virtuous man in a long gown, with a scrip, and a staff, and a cockle-shell on his hat; then followed a representation of an extremely old person with flowing white hair and beard; the figure 2 was the next symbol, and beyond this was a gentleman on crutches, looking at a five-barred gate. Oh, how that rebus haunted me! It was at a sea-side library that I met with it during the holidays, and before the next number came out I was back

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at school. The publication in which this remarkable picture had appeared was an expensive one, and quite beyond my means, so there was no way of getting at the explanation. Determined to conquer, and fearing that one of the symbols might escape my memory, I wrote them down in order. In doing so, an interpretation flashed upon me. A — Pilgrim — Age — To — Cripple — Gate. Ah! was it the right one? Had I triumphed, or had I failed? My anxiety on the subject attained such a pitch at last, that I determined to write to the editor of the periodical in which the rebus had appeared, and implore him to take compassion upon me and relieve my mind. To that communication I received no answer. Perhaps there was one in the notices to correspondents — but then I must have purchased the periodical to get it.

I mention these particulars because they had something — not a little — to do with a certain small incident which, small though it was, had influence on my after life. The incident in question was the composition of a riddle by the present writer. It was composed with difficulty, on a slate; portions of it were frequently rubbed out, the wording of it gave me a world of trouble, but the work was achieved at last. "Why," it was thus that I worded it in its final and corrected form, "Why does a young gentleman who has partaken freely of the pudding, which at this establishment precedes the meat, resemble a meteor? — Because he's effulgent — a full gent!"

Hopeful, surely! Nothing unnaturally premature in the composition. Founded on a strictly boyish grievance. Possessing a certain archæological interest in its reference to the now obsolete practice of administer-

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ing pudding before meat at educational establishments, with the view of damping the appetite (and constitution) of the pupils.

Though inscribed upon perishable and greasy slate, in ephemeral slate-pencil, my riddle lived. It was repeated. It became popular. It was all over the school, and at last it came to the ears of the master. That unimaginative person had no taste for the fine arts. I was sent for, interrogated as to whether this work of art was the product of my brain, and, having given an answer in the affirmative, received a distinct, and even painful, punch on the head, accompanied by specific directions to inscribe straightway the words "Dangerous Satirising," two thousand times, on the very slate on which my riddle had been originally composed.

Notwithstanding this act of despotism on the part of the unappreciative Beast who invariably treated me as if I were not profitable (when I knew the contrary), my reverence for the great geniuses who have excelled in the department of which I am speaking, grew with my growth, and strengthened with &c. Think of the pleasure, the rapture, which Riddles afford to persons of wholesomely constituted mind! Think of the innocent sense of triumph felt by the man who propounds a riddle to a company, to every member of which it is a novelty. He alone is the proprietor of the answer. His is a glorious position. He keeps everybody waiting. He wears a calm and placid smile. He has the rest at his mercy. He is happy —— innocently happy.

But who makes the Riddles?

I DO.

Am I going to let out a great mystery? Am I going

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to initiate the uninitiated? Am I going to let the world know *how it is done?*

Yes. I am.

It is done in the main by the Dictionary; but the consultation of that work of reference, with a view to the construction of riddles, is a process so bewildering — it puts such a strain upon the faculties — that at first you cannot work at it for more than a quarter of an hour at once. The process is terrific. First of all you get yourself thoroughly awake and on the alert — it is good to run the fingers through the hair roughly at this crisis — then you take your Dictionary, and, selecting a particular letter, you go down the column, stopping at every word that looks in the slightest degree promising, drawing back from it as artists draw back from a picture to see it the better, twisting it, and turning it, and if it yield nothing, passing on to the next. With the substantives you occupy yourself in an especial manner, as more may be done with them than with any of the other parts of speech; while as to the words with two meanings, you must be in a bad state indeed, or have particularly ill luck, if you fail to get something out of them.

Suppose that you are going in for a day's riddling — your dinner depending on the success of your efforts. I take your Dictionary, and open it at hap-hazard. You open, say, among the Fs, and you go to work.

You make several stoppages as you go down the column. You pause naturally at the word Felt. It is a past participle of the verb to feel, and it is a substance used in making hats. You press it hard. Why is a hatter — No — Why may a hatter invariably be looked upon as a considerate person? Because he has

always *felt* for — No. That won't do. You go on. "Fen" — a chance here for a well-timed thing about the Fenian Brotherhood. This is worth a struggle, and you make a desperate one. A Fen is a marsh. In a marsh there is mud. Why was it always to be expected that the Irish rebels must ultimately stick in the mud? Because theirs was a *Fen*-ian movement. — Intolerable! Yet you are loth to abandon the subject. A Fen is a Morass. More-ass. Why is an Irish rebel more ass than knave? No, again it won't do!

Disconsolate, but dogged, you go on till you arrive at "Fertile." Fer-tile. Tile — Tile, a Hat. Why is a Hat made of Beaver, like land that always yields fine crops? Because it may be called Fertile (Fur-tile). That will do. Not first-class, but it will do. Riddling is very like fishing. Sometimes you get a small trout, sometimes a large one. This is a small trout, but it shall go into the basket, nevertheless. And now you are fairly warming to your work. You come to "Forgery." You again make a point. Forgery. For-gery. — For Jerry. A complicated riddle of a high order. Intricate, and of the Coleridge kind. Why — No, If — If a gentleman, having a favourite son of tender years, named Jeremiah, were in the course of dessert to put a pear in his pocket, stating, as he did so, that the fruit was intended for his beloved boy, why, in making such an explanation, would he mention a certain act of felony once punishable by death? — Because he would say that it was Forgery — For Jerry. Into the basket.

It never rains but it pours. Another complex one, of the same type. Fungus! If a well-bred lady should, in sport, poke her cousin *Augustus* in the ribs with her

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lilac and white parasol, and hurt him, what vegetable product would she mention in facetiously apologising? Fungus. Fun Gus! In with it.

The Fs being exhausted, you take a short rest. Then, screwing your faculties up afresh, and seizing the Dictionary again, you open it once more. Cs this time lie before you, a page of Cs. You pause, hopeful, at corn. The word has two meanings, it ought to answer. It shall be made to answer. This is a case of a peculiar kind. You determine to construct a riddle by rule. There is no genius needed here. The word has two meanings; both shall be used; it is a mechanical process. Why is a reaper at his work, like a chiropodist? — Because he's a corn-cutter. Made by rule, complete, impregnable; but yet not interesting. The Cs are not propitious, and you apply to the Bs. In your loitering mood you drop down upon the word "Bring," and with idiotcy at hand sit gazing at it. Suddenly you revive — Bring, Brought, Brought up. Brought up will do. Why is the coal-scuttle which Mary has conveyed from the kitchen to the second floor, like an infant put out to dry-nurse? — Because it's brought up by hand. You try once more, and this time it is the letter H on which your hopes depend. The columns under H, duly perused, bring you in due time to Horse. Why is a horse attached to the vehicle of a miser, like a war-steamer of the present day? — Because he's driven by a screw. Another? Hoarse. Why is a family, the members of which have always been subject to sore-throats, like "The Derby?" — Because it's a hoarse-race (Horse-race).

It is by no means always the case, however, that the Dictionary affords so large a yield as this. It is

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hard work — exhausting work — and, worst of all, *there is no end to it.* You get, after a certain time, incapable of shaking off the shop even in your moments of relaxation. Nay, worse. You feel as if you *ought* to be always at it, lest you should miss a good chance, that would never return. It is this that makes epigrammatic literature wearing. If you go to the play, if you take up a newspaper, if you ensconce yourself in a corner with a blessed work of fiction, you find yourself still pursued and haunted by your profession. The dialogue to which you listen when you go to the theatre, the words of the book you are reading, may suggest something, and it behoves you to be on the look-out. Horrible and distracting calling! You may get rid of your superfluous flesh more quickly by going through a course of riddling, than by running up-hill in blankets for a week together, or going through a systematic course of Turkish baths.

Moreover, the cultivator of epigrammatic literature has much to undergo in the disposal of his wares, when they are once ready for the market. There is a public sale for them, and, between ourselves, there is a private ditto. The public demand for the article, which it has been so long my lot to supply, is not large, nor, I am constrained to say, is it entirely cordial. The periodicals in which your rebus or your conundrum appears hebdomadally, are not numerous; nor are the proprietors of such journals respectfully eager for this peculiar kind of literature. The conundrum or the rebus will knock about the office for a long time, and, perhaps, only get inserted at last because it fits a vacant space. When we *are* inserted, we always — always mind — occupy an ignoble place.

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We come in at the bottom of a column, or occupy the very last lines of the periodical in which we appear — in company with that inevitable game at chess in which white is to check-mate in four moves. One of the best riddles — *the* best, I think, that I ever made — was knocking about at the office of a certain journal six weeks before it got before the public. It ran thus: Why is a little man who is always telling long stories about nothing, like a certain new kind of rifle? ANSWER: Because he's a small-bore.

This work was the means of bringing me acquainted with the fact that there was a Private as well as a Public sale for the productions of the epigrammatic artist. A gentleman, who did not give his name — neither will I give it, though I know it well — called at the office of the periodical in which this particular riddle appeared, on the day succeeding its publication, and asked for the name and address of its author. The sub-editor of the journal, a fast friend of mine, to whom I owe many a good turn, furnished him with both, and, on a certain day, a middle-aged gentleman of rather plethoric appearance, with a sly twinkle in his eye, and with humorous lines about his mouth — both eye and mouth were utter impostors, for my friend had not a particle of humour in his composition — came gasping up my stairs, and introducing himself as an admirer of genius — "and therefore," he added, with a courteous wave of the hand, "your very humble servant" — wished to know whether it would suit my purpose to supply him, from time to time, with certain specimens of epigrammatic literature, now a riddle, now an epigram, now a short story that could be briefly and effectively told, all of which should be

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guaranteed to be entirely new and original, which should be made over wholly and solely to him, and to which no other human being should have access on any consideration whatever. My gentleman added that he was prepared to pay very handsomely for what he had, and, indeed, mentioned terms which caused me to open my eyes to the fullest extent of which those organs are capable.

I soon found out what my friend Mr. Price Scrooper was at. I call him by this name (which is fictitious, but something like his own), for the sake of convenience. He was a diner-out, who held a somewhat precarious reputation, which, by hook or crook, he had acquired as a sayer of good things, a man sure to have the last new story at the end of his tongue. Mr. Scrooper liked dining-out above all things, and the horror of that day when there should come a decline in the number of his invitations was always before his eyes. Thus it came about that relations were established between us — between me, the epigrammatic artist, and Price Scrooper, the diner-out.

I fitted him with a good thing or two even on the very day of his paying me a first visit. I gave him a story which I remembered to have heard my father tell when I was an infant — a perfectly safe story, which had been buried for years in oblivion. I supplied him with a riddle or two which I happened to have by me, and which were so very bad that no company could ever suspect them of a professional origin. I set him up in epigram for some time, and he set me up in the necessaries of life for some time, and so we parted mutually satisfied.

The commercial dealings thus satisfactorily estab-

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blished were renewed steadily and at frequent intervals. Of course, as in all earthly relations, there were not wanting some unpleasant elements to qualify the generally comfortable arrangements. Mr. Scrooper would sometimes complain that some of the witticisms with which I had supplied him, had failed in creating an effect — had hardly proved remunerative, in short. What could I reply? I could not tell him that this was his fault. I told him a story given by Isaac Walton, of a clergyman who, hearing a sermon preached by one of his cloth with immense effect, asked for the loan of it. On returning the sermon, however, after having tried it on his own congregation, he complained that it had proved a total failure, and that his audience had responded in no degree to his eloquence. The answer of the original proprietor of the sermon was crushing: "I lent you," he said, "indeed, my fiddle, but not my fiddle-stick;" meaning, as Isaac explains, rather unnecessarily, "the manner and intelligence with which the sermon was to be delivered."

My friend did not seem to feel the application of this anecdote. I believe he was occupied, while I spoke, in committing the story to his memory for future use — thus getting it gratuitously out of me — which was mean.

In fact, Mr. Scrooper, besides his original irreparable deficiency, was getting old and stupid, and would often forget or misapply the point of a story, or the answer to a conundrum. With these last I supplied him freely, working really hard to prepare for his use such articles as were adapted to his peculiar exigencies. As a diner-out, riddles of a convivial sort — alluding to matters connected with the pleasures of the table —

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are generally in request, and with a supply of these I fitted Mr. Scrooper, much to his satisfaction. Here are some specimens, for which I charged him rather heavily:

Why is wine — observe how easily this is brought in after dinner — why is wine, made up for the British market, like a deserter from the army?

Because it's always brandied (branded) before it's sent off.

Why is a ship, which has to encounter rough weather before it reaches its destination, like a certain wine which is usually adulterated with logwood and other similar matters?

Because it goes through a vast deal before it comes into port.

What portion of the trimming of a lady's dress resembles East India sherry of the first quality?

That which goes round the Cape.

One of his greatest difficulties, my patron told me — for he was as frank with me as a man is with his doctor or his lawyer — was in remembering which were the houses where he had related a certain story, or propounded a certain conundrum; who were the people to whom such and such a riddle would be fresh; who were the people to whom it was already but too familiar. Mr. Scrooper had also a habit of sometimes asking the answer to a riddle instead of the question, which was occasionally productive of confusion; or, giving the question properly, he would, when his audience became desperate and gave it up, supply them with the answer to an altogether different conundrum.

One day, my patron came to me in a state of high

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indignation. A riddle — bran new, and for which I had demanded a high price, thinking well of it myself — had failed, and Mr. Scrooper came to me in a rage to expostulate.

"It fell as flat as ditch-water," he said. "Indeed, one very disagreeable person said there was nothing in it, and he thought there must be some mistake. A very nasty thing to say, considering that the riddle was given as my own. How could I be mistaken in my own riddle?"

"May I ask," said I, politely, "how you worded the question?"

"Certainly. I worded it thus: Why are we justified in believing that the pilgrims to Mecca, undertake the journey with mercenary motives?"

"Quite right," said I; "and the answer?"

"The answer," replied my patron, "was as you gave it me: Because they go for the sake of Mahomet."

"I am not surprised," I said, coldly, for I felt that I had been unjustly blamed, "that your audience was mystified. The answer, as I gave it to you, ran thus: Because they go for the sake of the profit (Prophet)!"

Mr. Scrooper subsequently apologised.

I draw near to the end of my narrative. The termination is painful, so is that of King Lear. The worst feature in it is, that it involves the acknowledgment of a certain deplorable piece of weakness on my own part.

I was really in the receipt of a very pretty little income from Mr. Scrooper, when one morning I was again surprised by a visit from a total stranger —

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again, as on a former occasion, a middle-aged gentleman — again an individual with a twinkling eye and a humorous mouth — again a diner-out, with two surnames — Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite I will call him, which is sailing as near the wind as I consider safe.

Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite came on the errand which had already brought Mr. Scrooper to the top of my stairs. He, too, had seen one of my productions in a certain journal (for I still kept up my relation with the public press), and he too having a similar reputation to maintain, and finding his brain at times rather sterile, had come to me to make exactly the same proposal which had already been made by Mr. Price Scrooper.

For a time the singularity of the coincidence absolutely took my breath away, and I remained staring speechlessly at my visitor in a manner which might have suggested to him that I was hardly the man to furnish him with anything very brilliant. However, I managed to recover myself in time. I was very guarded and careful in my speech, but finally expressed my readiness to come to terms with my new employer. These were soon settled: Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite having even more liberal views as to this part of the business than those entertained by Mr. Price Scrooper.

The only difficulty was to supply this gentleman quickly enough with what he wanted. He was in a hurry. He was going that very evening to a dinner-party, and it was supremely important that he should distinguish himself. The occasion was a special one. It must be something good. He would not stick at a

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trifle in the matter of terms, but he did want something super-excellent. A riddle — a perfectly new riddle — he would like best.

My stores were turned over, my desk was ransacked, and still he was not satisfied. Suddenly it flashed into my mind that I had something by me which would exactly do. The very thing; a riddle alluding to a subject of the day; a subject just at that time in everybody's mouth. One which there would be no difficulty in leading up to. In short, a very neat thing indeed. There was but one doubt in my mind. Had I already sold it to my original employer? That was the question, and for the life of me I could not answer it with certainty. The life of one addicted to such pursuits as mine, is chaotic; and with me more particularly, doing an extensive public *and* private trade, it was especially so. I kept no books, nor any record of my professional transactions. One thing which influenced me strongly to believe the riddle to be still unappropriated, was, that I had certainly received no intelligence as to its success or failure from Mr. Scrooper, whereas that gentleman never failed to keep me informed on that momentous point. I was in doubt, but I ended (so princely were the terms offered by my new patron) in giving myself the benefit of that doubt, and handing over the work of art in question to Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite.

If I were to say that I felt comfortable after having brought this transaction to a close, I should not speak the truth. Horrible misgivings filled my mind, and there were moments when, if it had been possible to undo what was done, I should have taken that retrogressive step. This, however, was out of the question.

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I didn't even know where my new employer was to be found. I had nothing for it but to wait and try my best to feel sanguine.

The circumstances which distinguished the evening of that eventful day on which I first received a visit from my new patron, were subsequently related to me with great accuracy, and not without rancorous comment, by both of those who sustained leading parts in the evening's performances. Yes, terrible to relate, on the following day both my patrons came to me, overflowing with fury, to tell me what had happened, and to denounce me as the first cause of the mischief. Both were furious, but my more recent acquaintance, Mr. Postlethwaite, was the more vehement in his wrath.

It appeared, according to this gentleman's statement, that having repaired at the proper time to the residence of the gentleman whose guest he was to be that evening, and who, he took occasion to inform me, was a personage of consideration, he found himself in the midst of a highly distinguished company. He had intended to be the last arrival, but a fellow named Scrooper, or Price, or something of that sort — both names, perhaps — was yet expected. He soon arrived, however, Mr. Postlethwaite said, and the company went down to dinner.

Throughout the meal, the magnificent nature of which I will not dilate upon, these two gentlemen were continually at loggerheads. They appear — and in this both the accounts which reached me tally — to have contradicted each other, interrupted each other, cut into each other's stories, on every occasion, until that sort of hatred was engendered between them which Christian gentlemen sharing a meal together do some-

times feel towards each other. I suspect that each had heard of the other as a "diner-out," though they had not met before, and that each was prepared to hate the other.

Adhering to the Postlethwaitean narrative faithfully, I find that all this time, and even when most aggravated by the conduct of my earliest patron, he was able to comfort himself with the reflection that he had by him in store the weapon wherewith, when the proper moment should arrive, to inflict the coup de grace upon his rival. That weapon was my riddle — my riddle fitted to a topic of the day.

The moment arrived. I shudder as I proceed. The meal was over, the wines had circulated once, and Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite began gently insidiously and with all the dexterity of an old performer, to lead the conversation in the direction of THE TOPIC. His place was very near to the seat occupied by my original patron, Mr. Price Scrooper. What was Mr. Postlethwaite's astonishment to hear that gentleman leading such conversation, as was within his jurisdiction, *also* in the direction of THE TOPIC! "Does he see that I want a lead, and is he playing into my hands?" thought my newest client. "Perhaps he's not such a bad fellow, after all. I'll do as much for him another time." This amicable view of the matter was but of brief duration. Madness was at hand! Two voices were presently heard speaking simultaneously:

MR. PRICE SCROOPER. The subject suggested a riddle to me this morning, as I was thinking it over.

MR. KERBY POSTLETHWAITE. A view of the thing struck me in the light of a riddle, this morning, quite suddenly.

Both speaking at once.

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The two were silent, each having stopped the other.

"I beg your pardon," said my first patron, with ferocious politeness, "you were saying that you —"

"Had made a riddle," replied my second patron. "Yes. I think that you also alluded to your having done something of the sort?"

"I did."

There was silence all round the table. Some illustrious person broke it at last by saying, "What a strange coincidence!"

"At all events," cried the master of the house, "let us hear one of them. Come, Scrooper, you spoke first."

"Mr. Postlethwaite, I insist upon having your riddle," said the lady of the house, with whom Mr. P. was the favourite.

Under these circumstances both gentlemen paused, and then, each bursting forth suddenly, there was a renewal of duet.

MR. PRICE SCROOPER. Why does the Atlantic cable, in its present condition —

MR. KERBY POSTLETHWAITE. Why does the Atlantic cable, in its present condition —

} Both speaking at once.

At this there was a general roar and commotion among those present. "Our riddles appear to be somewhat alike?" remarked Mr. Postlethwaite, in a bitter tone, and looking darkly at my first patron.

"It is the most extraordinary thing," replied that gentleman, "that I ever heard of!"

"Great wits jump," said the illustrious person who

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had previously spoken of an "extraordinary coincidence."

"At any rate, let us hear one of them," cried the host. "Perhaps they vary after the first few words. Come, Scrooper."

"Yes, let us hear one of them to the end," said the lady of the house, and she looked at Mr. Postlethwaite. This last, however, was sulky. Mr. Price Scrooper took advantage of the circumstance to come out with the conundrum in all its integrity.

"Why," asked this gentleman once more, "is the Atlantic cable, in its present condition, like a schoolmaster?"

"That is my riddle," said Mr. Postlethwaite, as soon as the other had ceased to speak. "I made it myself."

"On the contrary, it is mine, I assure you," replied Mr. Scrooper, very doggedly. "I composed it while shaving this morning."

Here again there was a pause, broken only by interjectional expressions of astonishment on the part of those who were present — led by the illustrious man.

Again the master of the house came to the rescue. "The best way of settling it," he said, "will be to ascertain which of our two friends knows the answer. Whoever knows the answer can claim the riddle. Let each of these gentlemen write down the answer on a piece of paper, fold it up, and give it to me. If the answers are identical, the coincidence will indeed be extraordinary."

"It is impossible that any one but myself *can* know

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the answer," remarked my first patron, as he wrote on his paper and folded it.

My second patron wrote also, and folded. "The answer," he said, "*can* only be known to me."

The papers were unfolded by the master of the house, and read one after the other.

ANSWER written by Mr. Price Scrooper: "Because it's supported by buoys (boys)."

ANSWER written by Mr. Kerby Postlethwaite: "Because it's supported by buoys (boys)."

There was a scene. There were recriminations. As I have said, on the following morning both gentlemen visited me betimes. They had not much to say after all. Were they not both in my power?

The curious thing is, that from that time dates the decline of my professional eminence. Of course, both my patrons took leave of me for ever. But I have also to relate that my powers of riddling took leave of me also. My mornings with the Dictionary became less and less productive of results, and, only a fortnight ago last Wednesday, I sent to a certain weekly publication a rebus presenting the following combination of objects: A giraffe, a hay-stack, a boy driving a hoop, the letter X, a crescent, a human mouth, the words "I wish," a dog standing on its hind legs, and a pair of scales. It appeared. It took. It puzzled the public. But for the life of me I cannot form the remotest idea what it meant, and I am ruined.

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IV.

NOT TO BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

To-day I, Eunice Fielding, have been looking over the journal which I kept of the first few weeks of my life in the world, after I left the seclusion of the German Moravian school, where I was educated. I feel a strange pity for myself, the tender ignorant innocent school-girl, freed from the peaceful shelter of the Moravian settlement, and thrust suddenly into the centre of a sorrowful household.

As I turn to this first page, there rises before me, like the memory of a former life, a picture of the noiseless grass-grown streets of the settlement, with the old-fashioned dwellings, and the quiet and serene faces looking out kindly upon the troop of children passing to the church. There is the home of the Single Sisters, with its shining and spotless casements; and close beside it, is the church where they and we worshipped, with its broad central aisle always separating the women from the men. I can see the girls in their picturesque caps, trimmed with scarlet, and the blue ribbons of the matrons, and the pure white head-gear of the widows; the burial-ground, where the separation is still maintained, and where the brethren and the sisters lie in undivided graves; and the kindly simple-hearted pastor, who was always touched with the feeling of our weakness. I see it all, as I turn over the pages of my short journal, with just a faint longing to return to the repose and innocent ignorance which encircled me while I dwelt among them, safely shut in from the sorrows of the world.

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Nov. 7. At home once more after an absence of three years; but home is changed. There used to be a feeling of mother's presence everywhere about the house, even if she were in the remotest room; but now, Susannah and Priscilla are wearing her apparel, and as they go in and out, and I catch a glimpse of the soft dove-coloured folds of the dresses, I look up with a start, half in hope of seeing my mother's face again. They are much older than I am, for Priscilla was ten years of age when I was born, and Susannah is three years older than Priscilla. They are very grave and serious, and it is well known, even in Germany, how religious they are. I suppose by the time I am as old as they are, I shall be the same.

I wonder if my father ever felt like a child; he looks as if he had lived for centuries. Last night I could not venture to look too closely into his face; but to-day I can see a very kind and peaceful expression underlying all the wrinkles and lines of care. In his soul there is a calm serene depth which no tempest can touch. That is plain. He is a good man, I know, though his goodness was not talked about at school, as was Susannah's and Priscilla's. When the coach set me down at the door, and he ran out into the street bareheaded, and took me at once into his arms, carrying me like a little child into our home, all my sorrow upon leaving my school-fellows, and the sisters, and our pastor, vanished away in the joy of being with him. God helping me — and surely he will help me to do this — I will be a comfort to my father.

The house is very different to what it was in my mother's time. The rooms look gloomy, for the walls are damp and mildewed, and the carpets are worn

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threadbare. It seems as if my sister had taken no pride in household matters. To be sure Priscilla is betrothed to one of the brethren, who dwells in Woodbury, about ten miles from here. She told me last night what a beautiful house he had, and how it was furnished with more luxury and costliness than our people often care for, inasmuch as we do not seek worldly show. She also displayed the fine linen she has been preparing for herself, with store of dresses, both in silks and stuffs. They looked so grand, spread out upon the poor furniture of our chamber, that I could not help but cast up in my own mind what the cost would be, and I inquired how my father's business prospered: at which Priscilla coloured, but Susannah uttered a low deep groan, which was answer enough.

This morning I unpacked my trunk, and gave a letter from the church to each of my sisters. It was to make known to them that Brother Schmidt, a missionary in the West Indies, desires that a fitting wife should be chosen for him by casting of lots, and sent out to him. Several of the single sisters in our settlement have given in their names, and such is the repute of Susannah and Priscilla, that they are notified of the application, that they may do likewise. Of course Priscilla, being already betrothed, has no thought of doing so; but Susannah has been deep in meditation all day, and now she is sitting opposite to me, pale and solemn, her brown hair, in which I can detect a silver thread or two, braided closely down her thin cheeks; but as she writes, a faint blush steals over her face, as if she were listening to Brother Schmidt, whom she has never seen, and whose voice she never heard. She has written her name — I can read it, "Susannah

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Fielding" — in her clear round steady hand, and it will be put into the lot with many others, from among which one will be drawn out, and the name written thereon will be that of Brother Schmidt's appointed wife.

Nov. 9. Only two days at home; but what a change there is in me. My brain is all confusion, and it might be a hundred years since I left school. This morning two strangers came to the house, demanding to see my father. They were rough hard men, whose voices sounded into my father's office, where he was busy writing, while I sat beside the fire, engaged in household sewing. I looked up at the loud noise of their voices, and saw him turn deadly pale, and bow his white-haired head upon his hands. But he went out in an instant, and returning with the strangers, bade me go to my sisters. I found Susannah in the parlour, looking scared and bewildered, and Priscilla in hysterics. After much ado they grew calmer, and when Priscilla was lying quiet on the sofa, and Susannah had sat down in mother's arm-chair to meditate, I crept back to my father's office, and rapping softly at the door, heard him say, "Come in." He was alone, and very sad.

"Father," I asked, "what is the matter?" and seeing his dear kind face, I flew to him.

"Eunice," he whispered very tenderly, "I will tell you all."

So then as I knelt at his knee, with my eyes fastened upon his, he told me a long history of troubles, every word of which removed my school-days farther and farther from me, and made them seem like the close of a finished life. The end of all was that these

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men were sent by his creditors to take possession of everything in our old home, where my mother had lived and died.

I caught my breath at first, as if I should go into hysterics like Priscilla, but I thought what good would that do for my father? So after a minute or two I was able to look up again bravely into his eyes. He then said he had his books to examine, so I kissed him, and came away.

In the parlour Priscilla was lying still, with her eyelids closed, and Susannah was quite lost in meditation. Neither of them noticed me entering or departing. I went into the kitchen to consult Jane about my father's dinner. She was rocking herself upon a chair, and rubbing her eyes red with her rough apron; and there in the elbow-chair which once belonged to my grandfather — all the Brethren knew George Fielding — sat one of the strangers, wearing a shaggy brown hat, from under which he was staring fixedly at a bag of dried herbs hanging to a hook in the ceiling. He did not bring his eyes down, even when I entered, and stood thunderstruck upon the door-sill; but he rounded up his large mouth, as if he were going to whistle.

"Good morning, sir," I said, as soon as I recovered myself; for my father had said we must regard these men only as the human instruments permitted to bring affliction to us; "will you please to tell me your name?"

The stranger fixed his eyes steadily upon me. After which he smiled a little to himself.

"John Robins is my name," he said, "and Eng-

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land is my nation, Woodbury is my dwelling-place, and Christ is my salvation."

He spake in a sing-song tone, and his eyes went up again to the bag of marjoram, twinkling as if with great satisfaction; and I pondered over his reply, until it became quite a comfort to me.

"I'm very glad to hear it," I said, at last, "because we are religious people, and I was afraid you might be different."

"Oh, I'll be no kind of nuisance, miss," he answered; "you make yourselves comfortable, and only bid Maria, here, to draw me my beer regular, and I'll not hurt your feelings."

"Thank you," I said. "Jane, you hear what Mr. Robins says. Bring some sheets down to air, and make up the bed in the Brothers' chamber. You'll find a bible and hymn-book on the table there, Mr. Robins." I was leaving the kitchen, when this singular man struck his clenched fist upon the dresser, with a noise which startled me greatly.

"Miss," he said, "don't you put yourself about; and if anybody else should ever put you out, about anything, remember John Robins of Woodbury. I'm your man for anything, whether in my line or out of my line; I am, by ——"

He was about to add something more, but he paused suddenly, and his face grew a little more red, as he looked up again to the ceiling. So I left the kitchen.

I have since been helping my father with his books, being very thankful that I was always quick at sums.

P.S. I dreamed that the settlement was invaded by an army of men, led by John Robins, who insisted upon becoming our pastor.

November 10. I have been a journey of fifty miles, one half of it by stage-coach. I learned for the first time that my mother's brother, a worldly rich man, dwells fifteen miles beyond Woodbury. He does not belong to our people, and he was greatly displeased by my mother's marriage. It also appears that Susannah and Priscilla were not my mother's own daughters. My father had a little forlorn hope that our worldly kinsman might be inclined to help us in our great extremity; so I went forth with his blessings and prayers upon my errand. Brother More, who came over to see Priscilla yesterday, met me at Woodbury Station, and saw me safely on the coach for my uncle's village. He is much older than I fancied; and his face is large, and coarse, and flabby-looking. I am surprised that Priscilla should betroth herself to him. However, he was very kind to me, and watched the coach out of the inn-yard; but almost before he was out of my sight, he was out of my mind, and I was considering what I should say to my uncle.

My uncle's house stands quite alone in the midst of meadows and groves of trees, all of which are leafless now, and waved to and fro in the damp and heavy air, like funeral plumes. I trembled greatly as I lifted the brass knocker, which had a grinning face upon it; and I let it fall with one loud single rap, which set all the dogs barking, and the rooks cawing in the tops of the trees. The servant conducted me across a low-roofed hall, to a parlour beyond: low-roofed also, but large and handsome, with a warm glow of crimson, which was pleasant to my eyes, after the grey gloom of the November day. It was already afternoon; and a tall fine-looking old man was lying comfortably upon a

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sofa fast asleep; while upon the other side of the hearth sat a dwarfed old lady, who lifted her fore-finger with a gesture of silence, and beckoned me to take a seat near the fire. I obeyed, and presently fell into a meditation.

At length a man's voice broke the silence, asking in a drowsy tone,

"What young lass is this?"

"I am Eunice Fielding," I replied, rising with reverence to the aged man, my uncle; and he gazed upon me with his keen grey eyes, until I was abashed, and a tear or two rolled down my cheeks in spite of myself, for my heart was very heavy.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "as like Sophy as two peas out of one pod!" and he laughed a short laugh, which, in my ears, lacked merriment. "Come here, Eunice," he added, "and kiss me."

Whereupon I walked gravely across the open space between us, and bent my face to his; but he would have me to sit upon his knee, and I, who had been at no time used to be fondled thus, even by my father, sat there uncomfortably.

"Well, my pretty one," said my uncle, "what is your errand and request to me? Upon my soul, I feel ready to promise thee anything."

As he spake, I bethought me of King Herod, and the sinful dancing-girl, and my heart sank within me; but at last I took courage, as did Esther the queen, and I made known my urgent business to him, telling him, even with tears, that my father was threatened with a prison, if he could find none to befriend him.

"Eunice," said my uncle, after a very long silence, "I will make a bargain with you and your father. He

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stole away my fovourite sister from me, and I never saw her face again. I've no children, and I'm a rich man. If your father will give you up to me, keeping no claim upon you — even to never seeing your face again, if I so will it — then I will pay all his debts, and adopt you as my own daughter."

Before he could finish all these words, I sprang away from him, feeling more angered than I had ever done in my life.

"It could never be," I cried. "My father could never give me up, and I will never leave him."

"Be in no hurry to decide, Eunice," he said; "your father has two other daughters. I will give you an hour to reflect."

Upon that he and his wife left me alone in the pleasant room. My mind was firmly made up from the beginning. But as I sat before the glowing fire, it seemed as if all the bleak cold days of the coming winter trooped up and gathered round me, chilling the warm atmosphere of the room, and touching me with icy fingers, until I trembled like a coward. So I opened my little lot-book, which our pastor had given unto me, and I looked anxiously at the many slips of paper it contained. Many times I had drawn a lot from it, and found but vague counsel and comfort. But I now drew therefrom again, and the words upon the lot were "Be of good courage!" Then I was greatly strengthened.

When the hour was ended, my uncle returned, and urged me with many worldly persuasions and allurements, mingled with threatenings, until at length I grew bold to answer him according to his snares.

"It is an evil thing," I said, "to tempt a child to

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forsake her father. Providence has put it into your power to lessen the sorrows of your fellow-creatures, but you seek to add to them. I would rather dwell with my father in a jail, than with you in a palace."

I turned and left him, finding my way out through the hall into the deepening twilight. It was more than a mile from the village through which the coach passed; and the hedge-banks rose high on each side of the deep lane. Though I walked very swiftly, the night came on before I had proceeded far from my uncle's house, with such thick gloom and fog that I could almost feel the darkness. "Be of good courage, Eunice!" said I; and to drive away the fears which lay in wait for me if I yielded but a little, I lifted up my voice, and began to sing our Evening Hymn.

Suddenly a voice a little way before me, took up the tune, in a clear deep rich tone, like that of the Brother who taught us music in the Settlement. As I stopped instantly, my heart leaping up with fear and a strange gladness, the voice before me ceased singing also.

"Good night," it said. There was such kindness and frankness and sweetness in the voice, that I trusted it at once.

"Wait for me," I said; "I am lost in the night, and I want to find my way to Longville."

"I am going there too," said the voice, to which I drew nearer each moment; and immediately I saw a tall dark figure in the mist beside me.

"Brother," I said, trembling a little, though wherefore I knew not, "are we far from Longville?"

"Only ten minutes' walk," he answered, in a blithe

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tone, which cheered me not a little. "Take my arm, and we shall soon be there."

As my hand rested on his arm lightly, I felt a sense of great support and protection. As we came near the lighted window of the village inn, we looked into one another's faces. His was pleasant and handsome, like some of the best pictures I have ever seen. I do not know why, but I thought of the Angel Gabriel.

"We are at Longville," he said; "tell me where I can take you to."

"Sir," I answered, for I could not say Brother to him in the light; "I wish first to get to Woodbury."

"To Woodbury," he repeated, "at this time of night, and alone! There is a return coach coming up in a few minutes, by which I travel to Woodbury. Will you accept of my escort there?"

"Sir, I thank you," I answered; and I stood silent beside him, until the coach lamps shone close upon us in the fog. The stranger opened the door, but I hung back with a foolish feeling of shame at my poverty, which it was needful to conquer.

"We are poor people," I stammered. "I must travel outside."

"Not such a winter's night as this," he said. "Jump in."

"No, no," I replied, recovering my senses, "I shall go outside." A decent country woman, with a child, were already seated on the top of the coach, and I quickly followed them. My seat was the outer one, and hung over the wheels. The darkness was so dense that the fitful glimmer of the coach-lamps upon the

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leafless hedge-rows was the only light to be seen. All else was black, pitchy night. I could think of nothing but my father, and the jail opening to imprison him. Presently I felt a hand laid firmly on my arm, and Gabriel's voice spake to me:

"Your seat is a dangerous one," he said. "A sudden jerk might throw you off."

"I am so miserable," I sobbed, all my courage breaking down; and in the darkness I buried my face in my hands, and wept silently; and even as I wept, the bitterness of my sorrow was assuaged.

"Brother," I said — for in the darkness I could call him so again. "I am only just come home from school, and I have not learned the ways and troubles of the world yet."

"My child," he answered, in a low tone, "I saw you lean your head upon your hands and weep. Can I be of any help to you?"

"No," I replied; "the sorrow belongs to me only, and to my house."

He said no more, but I felt his arm stretched out to form a barrier across the space where I might have fallen; and so through the black night we rode on to Woodbury.

Brother More was awaiting me at the coach-office. He hurried me away, scarcely giving me time to glance at Gabriel, who stood looking after me. He was eager to hear of my interview with my uncle; when I told him of my failure, he grew thoughtful, saying little until I was in the railway carriage, when he leaned forward and whispered, "Tell Priscilla I will come over in the morning."

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Brother More is a rich man; perhaps, for Priscilla's sake, he will free my father.

Nov. 11. I dreamed last night that Gabriel stood beside me, saying, "I come to bring thee glad tidings." But as I listened eagerly, he sighed, and vanished away.

Nov. 15. Brother More is here every day, but he says nothing about helping my father. If help does not come soon, he will be cast into prison. Peradventure, my uncle will relent, and offer us some easier terms. If it were only to live half my time with him, I would consent to dwell in his house, even as Daniel and the three children dwelt unharmed in the court of Babylon. I will write to him to that effect.

Nov. 19. No answer from my uncle. To-day, going to Woodbury with Priscilla, who wished to converse with the pastor of the church there, I spent the hour she was engaged with him in finding my way to the jail, and walking round the outside of its gloomy and massive walls. I felt very mournful and faint-hearted, thinking of my poor father. At last, being very weary, I sat down on the step at the gateway, and looked into my little lot-book again. Once more I drew the verse "Be of good courage." Just then, Brother More and Priscilla appeared. There was a look upon his face which I disliked, but I remembered that he was to be my sister's husband, and I rose and offered him my hand, which he tucked up under his arm, his fat hand resting upon it. So we three walked to and fro under the prison walls. Suddenly, in a garden sloping away beneath us, I perceived him whom I call Gabriel (not knowing any other name), with a fair sweet-looking young woman at his side. I could not refrain from

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weeping, for what reason I cannot tell, unless it be my father's affairs. Brother More returned home with us, and sent John Robins away. John Robins desired me to remember him, which I will as long as I live.

Nov. 20. Most miserable day. My poor father is in jail. At dinner-time to-day two most evil-looking men arrested him. God forgive me for wishing they were dead! Yet my father spake very patiently and gently.

"Send for Brother More," he said, after a pause, "and act according to his counsel."

So after a little while they carried him away.

What am I to do?

Nov. 30. Late last night we were still discoursing as to our future plans. Priscilla thinks Brother More will hasten their marriage, and Susannah has an inward assurance that the lot will fall to her to be Brother Schmidt's wife. She spake wisely of the duties of a missionary's life, and of the grace needed to fulfil them. But I could think of nothing but my father trying to sleep within the walls of the jail.

Brother More says he thinks he can see a way to release my father, only we are all to pray that we may have grace to conquer our self-will. I am sure I am willing to do anything, even to selling myself into slavery, as some of our first missionaries did in the slave-times in the West Indies. But in England one cannot sell one's self, though I would be a very faithful servant. I want to get at once a sum large enough to pay our debts. Brother More bids me not spoil my eyes with crying.

Dec. 1. The day on which my father was arrested, I made a last appeal to my uncle. This morning I

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had a brief note from him, saying he had commissioned his lawyer to visit me, and state the terms on which he was willing to aid me. Even as I read it, his lawyer desired to see me alone. I went to the parlour, trembling with anxiety. It was no other than Gabriel who stood before me, and I took heart, remembering my dream that he appeared to me, saying, "I come to bring thee glad tidings."

"Miss Eunice Fielding," he said, in his pleasant voice, and looking down upon me with a smile which seemed to shed sunshine upon my sad and drooping spirit.

"Yes," I answered, my eyes falling foolishly before his; and I beckoned to him to resume his seat, while I stood leaning against my mother's great arm-chair.

"I have a hard message for you," said Gabriel; "your uncle has dictated this paper, which must be signed by you and your father. He will release Mr. Fielding, and settle one hundred pounds a year upon him, on condition that he will retire to some German Moravian settlement, and that you will accept the former terms."

"I cannot," I cried bitterly. "Oh! sir, ought I to leave my father?"

"I am afraid not," he answered, in a low voice.

"Sir," I said, "you must please say 'no' to my uncle."

"I will," he replied, "and make it sound as gently as I can. You have a friend in me, Miss Eunice."

His voice lingered upon Eunice, as if it were no common name to him, but something rare and pleasing. I never heard it spoken so pleasantly before. After a little while he rose to take his leave.

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"Brother," I said, giving him my hand, "farewell."

"I shall see you again, Miss Eunice," he answered.

He saw me again sooner than he expected, for I travelled by the next train to Woodbury, and, as I left the dark carriage in which I journeyed, I saw him alight from another part of the train, and at the same instant his eyes fell upon me.

"Where are you going to now, Eunice?" he demanded.

It seemed a pleasanter greeting than if he had called me Miss. I told him I knew my way to the jail, for that I had been not long ago to look at the outside of it. I saw the tears stand in his eyes, but, without speaking, he drew my hand through his arm, and I silently, but with a very lightened heart, walked beside him to the great portal of my father's prison.

We entered a square court, with nothing to be seen save the grey winter sky lying, as it were flat, overhead; and there was my father, pacing to and fro, with his arms crossed upon his breast and his head bowed down, as if it would never be raised again. I cried aloud, and ran and fell on his neck, and knew nothing more until I opened my eyes in a small bare room, and felt my father holding me in his arms, and Gabriel kneeling before me, chafing my hands, and pressing his lips upon them.

Afterwards Gabriel and my father conferred together; but before long Brother More arrived, whereupon Gabriel departed. Brother More said, solemnly:

"That man is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and our Eunice is a tender lamb."

I cannot believe that Gabriel is a wolf.

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Dec. 2. I have taken a room in a cottage near the jail, the abode of John Robins and his wife, a decent tidy woman. So I can spend every day with my father.

Dec. 13. My father has been in prison a whole fortnight. Brother More went over to see Priscilla last night, and this morning he is to lay before us his plan for my father's release. I am going to meet him at the jail.

When I entered the room, my father and Brother More looked greatly perturbed, and my poor father leaned back in his chair, as if exhausted after a long conflict.

"Speak to her, brother," he said.

Then Brother More told us of a heavenly vision which had appeared to him, directing him to break off his betrothal to Priscilla, and to take me — *me!* — for his wife. After which he awoke, and these words abode in his mind, "The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

"Therefore, Eunice," he said, in an awful voice, "do you and Priscilla see to it, lest you should be found fighting against the Lord."

I was struck dumb as with a great shock, but I heard him add these words:

"I was also instructed in the vision, to set your father free, upon the day that you become my wife."

"But," I said at last, my whole heart recoiling from him, "this would be a shameful wrong to Priscilla. It cannot be a vision from Heaven, but a delusion and snare. Marry Priscilla, and set my father free? Surely, surely, it was a lying vision."

"No," he said, fastening his gaze upon me; "I

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chose Priscilla rashly of my own judgment. Therein I erred; but I have promised her half her dowry as a compensation for my error."

"Father," I cried, "surely I ought to have some direction also, as well as he. Why should only he have a vision?" Then I added that I would go home and see Priscilla, and seek a sign for my own guidance.

December 14. Priscilla was ill in bed when I reached home, and refused to see me. I arose at five o'clock this morning, and stole down into the parlour. As I lighted the lamp, the parlour looked forlorn and deserted, and yet there lingered about it a ghostly feeling, as if perhaps my mother, and the dead children whom I never saw, had been sitting on the hearth in the night, as we sat in the daytime. Maybe she knew of my distress, and had left some tokens for my comfort and counsel. My Bible lay upon the table, but it was closed; her angel fingers hat not opened it upon any verse that might have guided me. There was no mode of seeking direction, save by casting of lots.

I cut three little slips of paper of one length, and exactly similar — *three*, though surely I only needed two. Upon the first I wrote, "To be Brother More's wife," and upon the second, "To be a Single Sister." The third lay upon the desk, blank and white, as if waiting for some name to be written upon it, and suddenly all the chilly cold of the winter morning passed into a sultry heat, until I threw open the casement, and let the frosty air breathe upon my face. I said in my own heart I would leave myself a chance, though my conscience smote me for that word "chance." So

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I laid the three slips of paper between the leaves of my Bible, and sat down opposite to them, afraid of drawing the lot which held the secret of my future life.

There was no mark to guide me in the choice of one slip of paper from another; and I dared not stretch out my hand to draw one of them. For I was bound to abide by the solemn decision. It seemed too horrible to become Brother More's wife; and to me the Sisters' Home, where the Single Sisters dwell, having all things in common, seems dreary and monotonous and somewhat desolate. But if I should draw the blank paper! My heart fluttered; again and again I stretched out my hand, and withdrew it; until at last the oil in the lamp being spent, its light grew dimmer and dimmer, and, fearful of being still longer without guidance, I snatched the middle lot from between the leaves of my Bible. There was only a glimmer of dying light, by which I read the words, "To be Brother More's wife."

That is the last entry in my journal, written three years ago.

When Susannah came down stairs and entered the parlour, she found me sitting before my desk, almost in an idiotic state, with that miserable lot in my hand. There was no need to explain it to her; she looked at the other slip of paper, one blank, and the other inscribed, "To be a Single Sister," and she knew I had been casting lots. I remember her crying over me a little, and kissing me with unaccustomed tenderness; and then she returned to her chamber, and I heard her speaking to Priscilla in grave and sad tones. After that, we were all passive; even Priscilla was stolidly resigned. Brother More came over, and Susannah in-

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formed him of the irrevocable lot which I had drawn; but besought him to refrain from seeing me that day; and he left me alone to grow somewhat used to the sense of my wretchedness.

Early the next morning I returned to Woodbury; my only consolation being the thought that my dear father would be set free, and might live with me in wealth and comfort all the rest of his life. During the succeeding days I scarcely left his side, never suffering Brother More to be alone with me; and morning and night John Robins or his wife accompanied me to the gate of the jail, and waited for me to return with them to their cottage.

My father was to be set free, only on my wedding-day, and the marriage was hurried on. Many of Priscilla's store of wedding garments were suitable for me. Every hour brought my doom nearer.

One morning, in the gloom and twilight of a December dawn, I suddenly met Gabriel in my path. He spake rapidly and earnestly, but I scarcely knew what he said, and I answered, falteringly:

"I am going to be married to Brother Joshua More on New Year's-day, and he will then release my father."

"Eunice," he cried, standing before me in the narrow path, "you can never marry him. I know the fat hypocrite. Good Heaven! I love you a hundred times better than he does. Love! The rascal does not know what it means."

I answered not a word, for I felt afraid both of myself and him, though I did not believe Gabriel to be a wolf in sheep's clothing.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

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"No," I whispered.

"I am your uncle's nephew by marriage," he said, "and I have been brought up in his house. Break off this wicked marriage with the fellow More, and I will engage to release your father. I am young, and can work. I will pay your father's debts."

"It is impossible," I replied. "Brother More has had a heavenly vision, and I have drawn the lot. There is no hope. I must marry him upon New Year's-day."

Then Gabriel persuaded me to tell him the whole story of my trouble. He laughed a little, and bade me be of good comfort; and I could not make him understand how impossible it was that I should contend against the dispensation of the lot.

Always when I was with my father I strove to conceal my misery, talking to him of the happy days we should spend together some time. Likewise I sang within the walls of the prison, the simple hymns which we had been wont to sing in the peaceful church at school amid a congregation of serene hearts, and I strengthened my own heart and my father's by the recollected counsels of my dear lost pastor. Thus my father guessed little of my hidden suffering, and looked forward with hope to the day that would throw open his prison doors.

Once I went to the pastor, dwelling in Woodbury, and poured out my heart to him — save that I made no mention of Gabriel — and he told me it was often thus with young girls before their marriage, but that I had a clear leading; he also told me that Brother More was a devout man, and I should soon love and reverence him as my husband.

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At length the last day of the year came; a great day among our people, when we drew our lot for the following year. Everything seemed at an end. All hope fled from me, if there ever had been any hope in my heart. I left my father early in the evening, for I could no longer conceal my wretchedness; yet when I was outside the prison walls I wandered to and fro, hovering about it, as if these days, miserable as they had been, were happy to those which were drawing near. Brother More had not been near us all day, but doubtless he was busy in his arrangements to release my father. I was still lingering under the great walls, when a carriage drove up noiselessly — for the ground was sprinkled with soft snow — and Gabriel sprang out, and almost clasped me in his arms.

"My dear Eunice," he said, "you must come with me at once. Our uncle will save you from this hateful marriage."

I do not know what I should have done had not John Robins called out from the driver's seat, "All right, Miss Eunice; remember John Robins."

Upon that I left myself in Gabriel's hands, and he lifted me into the carriage, wrapping warm coverings about me. It seemed to me no other than a happy dream, as we drove noiselessly along snowy roads, with the pale wan light of the young moon falling upon the white country, and now and then shining upon the face of Gabriel, as he leaned forward from time to time to draw the wrappers closer round me.

We might have been three hours on the way, when we turned into a by-road, which presently I recognised as the deep lane wherein I had first met Gabriel. We were going then to my uncle's house. So with a light-

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ened heart I stepped out of the carriage, and entered his doors for the second time.

Gabriel conducted me into the parlour which I had seen before, and placed me in a chair upon the hearth, removing my shawl and bonnet with a pleasant and courteous care; and he was standing opposite to me, regarding me with a smile upon his handsome face, when the door opened and my uncle entered.

"Come and kiss me, Eunice," he said; and I obeyed him wonderingly.

"Child," he continued, stroking my hair back from my face, "you would not come to me of your own will, so I commissioned this young fellow to kidnap you. We are not going to have you marry Joshua More. I cannot do with him as my nephew. Let him marry Priscilla."

There was such a hearty tone in my uncle's voice, that for a moment I felt comforted, though I knew that he could not set aside my lot. So he seated me beside him, while I still looked with wonderment into his face.

"I am going to draw a lot for you," he haid, with an air of merriment; "what would my little rosebud say to her fat suitor, if she knew that her father was a freed man at this moment?"

I dared not look into his face or into Gabriel's. For I remembered that I myself had sought for a token; and that no earthly power could set aside that, or the heavenly vision also, which Brother More had seen.

"Uncle," I said, shuddering, "I have no voice in this matter. I drew the lot fairly, and I must abide by it. You cannot help me."

"We will see," he answered; "it is New Year's-eve, you know, and time to draw again. The lot will

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neither be to become Brother More's wife, nor a Single Sister, I promise you. We shall draw the blank this time!"

While I yet wondered at these words, I heard a sound of footsteps in the hall, and the door opened, and my beloved father stood upon the threshold, stretching out his arms to me. How he came there I knew not; but I flew to him with a glad cry, and hid my face upon his breast.

"You are welcome, Mr. Fielding," said my uncle; "Phil!" — it did now appear that Gabriel's name was Philip — "bring Mr. More this way."

I started with fright and wonder, and my father also looked troubled, and drew me nearer to his side. Brother More entered with a cowardly and downcast mien, which made him appear a hundred-fold more repulsive in my eyes, as he stood near the door, with his craven face turned towards us.

"Mr. More," said my uncle, "I believe you are to marry my niece, Eunice Fielding, to-morrow?"

"I did not know she was your niece," he answered, in an abject tone. "I would not have presumed ——"

"But the heavenly vision, Mr. More?" interrupted my uncle.

He looked round for a moment, with a spiritless glance, and his eyes sank.

"It was a delusion," he muttered.

"It was a lie!" said Gabriel.

"Mr. More," continued my uncle, "if the heavenly vision be true, it will cost you the sum of five thousand five hundred pounds, the amount in which you are indebted to me, with sundry sums due to my nephew

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here. Yet if it be true, you must abide by it, of course."

"It was not true," he answered; "the vision was concerning Priscilla, to whom I was betrothed. I was ensnared to change the name to that of Eunice."

"Then go and marry Priscilla," said my uncle, good humouredly. "Philip, take him away."

But Priscilla would have no more to do with Brother More, and shortly afterwards she settled among the Single Sisters in the same settlement where I had lived my quiet and peaceful youth. Her store of wedding garments, which had been altered to fit me, came in at last for Susannah, who was chosen to be the wife of Brother Schmidt, according to her inward assurance; and she went out to join him in the West Indies, from whence she writes many happy letters. I was troubled for a time about my lot, but certainly if Brother More's vision was concerning Priscilla, I could not be required to abide by it. Moreover, I never saw him again. My uncle and father, who had never met before, formed a close friendship, and my uncle would hear of nothing but that we should dwell together in his large mansion, where I might be as a daughter unto both of them. People say we have left the Church of the United Brethren; but it is not so. Only, as I had found one evil man within it, so also I have found some good men without it.

Gabriel is not one of the Brethren.

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V.

TO BE TAKEN IN WATER.

Minnie, my blessed little wife, and I, had been just one month married. We had returned only two days from our honeymoon tour at Killarney. I was a junior partner in the firm of Schwarzmoor and Laddock, bankers, Lombard-street (I must conceal real names), and I had four days more of my leave of absence still to enjoy. I was supremely happy in my bright new cottage south-west of London, and was revelling in delicious idleness on that bright October morning, watching the great yellow leaves fall in the sunshine. Minnie sat by me under the hawthorn-tree; otherwise, I should *not* have been supremely happy.

Little Betsy, Minnie's maid, came fluttering down the garden with an ominous-looking letter in her hand.

It was a telegram from Mr. Schwarzmoor. It contained only these words:

"We want you to start to the Continent directly with specie. Neapolitan loan. No delay. Transactions of great importance since you left. Sorry to break up holiday. Be at office by 6.30. Start from London Bridge by 9.15, and catch Dover night boat."

"Is the boy gone?"

"Boy did not leave it, sir. Elderly gentleman, going to Dawson's, brought it. The office boy was out, and the gentleman happened to be coming past our house."

"Herbert dear, you won't go, you mustn't go," said Minnie, leaning on my shoulder, and bending down her face. "Don't go."

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"I must, my dearest. The firm has no one to trust to, but me, in such a case. It is but a week's absence. I must start in ten minutes, and catch the 4.20 on its way up."

"That was a very important telegram," I said sharply to the station-master, "and you ought not to have sent it by any unknown and unauthorised person. Who *was* this old gentleman, pray?"

"Who was it, Harvey?" said the station-master, rather sulkily, to the porter.

"Old gent, sir, very respectable, as comes to the Dawsons', the training-stables. Has horses there."

"Do not let that sort of thing occur again, Mr. Jennings," I said, "or I shall be obliged to report it. I wouldn't have had that telegram mislaid, for a hundred pounds."

Mr. Jennings, the station-master, grumbled something, and then boxed the telegraph boy's ears. Which seemed to do him (Mr. Jennings) good.

"We were getting very anxious," said Mr. Schwarzmoor, as I entered the bank parlour, only three minutes late. "Very anxious, weren't we, Goldrick?"

"Very anxious," said the little neat head clerk. "Very anxious."

Mr. Schwarzmoor was a full faced man of about sixty, with thick white eyebrows and a red face — a combination which gave him an expression of choleric old age. He was a shrewd severe man of business: a little impetuous and fond of rule, but polite, kind, and considerate.

"I hope your charming wife is quite well. Sorry,

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indeed, to break up your holiday; but no help for it, my dear fellow. There is the specie in those two iron boxes, enclosed in leather to look like samples. They are fastened with letter-locks, and contain a quarter of a million in gold. The Neapolitan king apprehends a rebellion." (It was three years before Garibaldi's victories.) "You will take the money to Messrs. Paglia-vicini and Rossi, No. 172 Toledo, Naples. The names that open the locks are, on the one with the white star on the cover, Masinisa; on the one with the black star, Cotopaxo. Of course you will not forget the talismanic words. Open the boxes at Lyons, to make sure that all is safe. Talk to no one. Make no friends on the road. Your commission is of vast importance."

"I shall pass," said I, "for a commercial traveller."

"Pardon me for my repeated cautions, Blamyre, but I am an older man than you, and know the danger of travelling with specie. If your purpose was known to-night in Paris, your road to Marseilles would be as dangerous as if all the galley-slaves at Toulon had been let loose in special chase of you. I do not doubt your discretion: I only warn you to be careful. Of course, you go armed?"

I opened my coat, nd showed a belt under my waistcoat, with a revolver in it. At which warlike spectacle the old clerk drew back in alarm.

"Good!" said Mr. Schwarzmoor. "But one grain of prudence is worth five times the five bullets in those five barrels. You will stop in Paris to-morrow to transact business with Lefebre and Desjeans, and you will go on by the 12.15 (night) to Marseilles, catching the boat on Friday. We will telegraph to you at

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Marseilles. Are the letters for Paris ready, Mr. Hargrave?"

"Yes, sir, nearly ready. Mr. Wilkins is hard at them."

I reached Dover by midnight, and instantly engaged four porters to carry my specie chests down the stone steps leading from the pier to the Calais boat. The first was taken on board quite safely; but while the second was being carried down, one of the men slipped, and would certainly have fallen into the water, had he not been caught in the arms of a burly old Indian officer, who, laden with various traps, and urging forward his good-natured but rather vulgar wife, was preceding me.

"Steady there, my lad," he said. "Why, what have you got there? Hardware?"

"Don't know, sir; I only know it's heavy enough to break any man's back," was the rough answer, as the man thanked his questioner in his blunt way.

"These steps, sir, are very troublesome for bringing down heavy goods," said an obliging voice behind me. "I presume, sir, from your luggage, that we are of the same profession?"

I looked round as we just then stepped on board. The person who addressed me was a tall thin man, with a long and rather Jewish nose, and a narrow elongated face. He wore a greatcoat too short for him, a flowered waistcoat, tight trousers, a high shirt collar, and a light sprigged stiff neckcloth.

I replied that I *had* the honour to be a commercial traveller, and that I thought we were going to have a rough night of it.

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"Decidedly dirty night," he replied; "and I advise you, sir, to secure a berth at once. The boat, I see, is very crowded."

I went straight to my berth, and lay down for an hour; at the end of that time I got up and looked around me. At one of the small tables sat half a dozen of the passengers, including the old Indian and my old-fashioned interrogator. They were drinking bottled porter, and appeared very sociable. I rose and joined them, and we exchanged some remarks not complimentary to night travelling.

"By Jove, sir, it is simply unbearable!" said the jovial Major Baxter (for he soon told us his name); "it is as stifling as Peshawah when the hot Tinsang wind is blowing; suppose we three go on deck and take a little air? My wife suffers in these crossings; she's invisible, I know, till the boat stops. Steward, bring up some more bottled porter."

When we got on deck, I saw, to my extreme surprise, made conspicuous by their black and white stars, four other cases exactly similar to mine, except that they had no painted brand upon them. I could hardly believe my eyes; but there they were; leather covers, letter-locks, and all.

"Those are mine, sir," remarked Mr. Levison (I knew my fellow-commercial's name from the captain's having addressed him by it). "I am travelling for the house of Mackintosh. Those cases contain waterproof paletots, the best made. Our house has used such cases for forty years. It is sometimes inconvenient, this accidental resemblance of luggage — leads to mistakes. Your goods are much heavier than my

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goods, as I judge? Gas improvements, railway chairs, cutlery, or something else in iron?"

I was silent, or I made some vague reply.

"Sir," said Levison, "I augur well of your future; trade secrets should be kept inviolate. Don't you think so, sir?"

The major thus appealed to, replied, "Sir, by Jove, you're right! One cannot be too careful in these days. Egad, sir, the world is a mass of deceit."

"There's Calais light!" cried some one at that moment; and there it was, straight ahead, casting sparkles of comfort over the dark water.

I thought no more of my travelling companions. We parted at Paris: I went my way and they went their way. The major was going to pay a visit at Dromont, near Lyons; thence he would go to Marseilles en route for Alexandria. Mr. Levison was bound for Marseilles, like myself and the major, but not by my train — at least he feared not — as he had much to do in Paris.

I had transacted my business in the French capital, and was on my way to the Palais Royal, with M. Lefebre fils, a great friend of mine. It was about six o'clock, and we were crossing the Rue St. Honoré, when there passed us a tall Jewish-looking person, in a huge white mackintosh, whom I recognised as Mr. Levison. He was in a hired open carriage, and his four boxes were by his side. I bowed to him, but he did not seem to notice me.

"Eh bien! That drôle, who is that?" said my friend, with true Parisian superciliousness.

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I replied that it was only a fellow-passenger, who had crossed with me the night before.

In the very same street I ran up against the major and his wife, on their way to the railway station.

"Infernal city, this," said the major; "smells so of onion. I should like, if it was mine, to wash it out, house by house; 'tain't wholesome, 'pon my soul 'tain't wholesome. Julia, my dear, this is my pleasant travelling companion of last night. By-the-by, just saw that commercial traveller! Sharp business man that: no sight-seeing about *him*. Bourse and bank all day, — senior partner some day."

"And how many more?" said my friend Lefebre, when we shook hands and parted with the jolly major. "That is a good boy — he superabounds — he overflows — but he is one of your epicurean lazy officers, I am sure. Your army, it must be reformed, or India will slip from you like a handful of sand — vous verrez, mon cher."

Midnight came, and I was standing at the terminus, watching the transport of my luggage, when a cab drove up, and an Englishman leaping out asked the driver in excellent French for change for a five-franc piece. It was Levison; but I saw no more of him, for the crowd just then pushed me forward.

I took my seat with only two other persons in the carriage — two masses of travelling cloak and capote — two bears, for all I could see to the contrary.

Once away from the lights of Paris, and in the pitch dark country, I fell asleep and dreamed of my dear little wife, and our dear little home. Then a feeling of anxiety ran across my mind. I dreamed that I had forgotten the words with which to open the

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letter-locks. I ransacked mythology, history, science, in vain. Then I was in the banking parlour at No. 172 Toledo, Naples, threatened with instant death by a file of soldiers, if I did not reveal the words, or explain where the boxes had been hid; for I had hidden them for some inscrutable no reason. At that moment an earthquake shook the city, a flood of fire rolled past beneath the window, Vesuvius had broken loose and was upon us. I cried in my agony — "Gracious Heaven, reveal to me those words!" when I awoke.

"Dromont! Dromont! Dix minutes d'arrête, messieurs."

Half blinded with the sudden light, I stumbled to the buffet, and asked for a cup of coffee, when three or four noisy young English tourists came hurrying in, surrounding a quiet imperturbable elderly commercial traveller. It was actually Levison again! They led him along in triumph, and called for champagne.

"Yes! yes!" the leader said. "You must have some, old fellow. We have won three games, you know, and you held such cards, too. Come along, look alive, you fellow with the nightcap — Cliquot — gilt top, you duffer. You shall have your revenge before we get to Lyons, old chap."

Levison chattered good humouredly about the last game, and took the wine. In a few minutes the young men had drunk their champagne, and had gone out to smoke. In another moment Levison caught my eye.

"Why, good gracious," he said, "who'd have thought of this! Well, I am glad to see you. Now, my dear sir, you must have some champagne with me. Here, another bottle, monsieur, if you please. I hope, long before we get to Lyons, to join you, my dear sir.

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I am tired of the noise of those youngsters. Besides, I object to high stakes, on principle."

The moment the waiter brought the champagne, Levison took the bottle.

"No," he said; "I never allow any one to open wine for me." He turned his back from me to remove the wire; removed it; and was filling my glass; when up dashed a burly hearty man to shake hands with me — so awkward in his heartiness that he broke the champagne bottle. Not a drop of the wine was saved. It was the major — hot as usual, and in a tremendous bustle.

"By Jove, sir; dooced sorry. Let me order another bottle. How are you, gentlemen? Lucky, indeed, to meet you both again. Julia's with the luggage. We can be very cozy together. More champagne here. What's bottle in French? Most shameful thing! Those French friends of Julia's were gone off to Biarritz, pretending to have forgotten that we were coming — after six weeks with us in London, too! Precious shabby, not to put too fine a point upon it. By Jove, sir, there's the bell. We'll all go in the same carriage. They will not bring that champagne."

Levison looked rather annoyed. "I shall not see you," he said, "for a station or two. I must join those boys, and let them give me my revenge. Cleared me out of twenty guineas! I have not been so imprudent since I was first on the road. Good-bye, Major Baxter — good-bye, Mr. Blamyre!"

I wondered how this respectable old fellow, who so keenly relished his game at whist, had got hold of my name; but I remembered in a moment that he must have seen the direction on my luggage.

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Flashes of crimson and green lights, a shout from some pointsman, a glimpse of rows of poplars, and lines of suburban houses, and we once more plunged into the yielding darkness.

I found the major very droll and pleasant, but evidently ruled by his fussy, good-natured, managing, masculine wife. He was full of stories of bungalows, compounds, and the hills; in all of which narrations he was perpetually interrupted by Mrs. Baxter.

"By Jove, sir!" he said, "I wish I could sell out, and go into your line of business. I am almost sick of India — it deranges one's liver so infernally."

"Now, John, how can you go on so! You know you never had a day's illness in all your life, except that week when you smoked out a whole box of Captain Mason's cheroots."

"Well, I pulled through it, Julia," said the major, striking himself a tremendous blow on the chest; "but I've been an unlucky devil as to promotion — always bad luck in everything. If I bought a horse, it made a point of going lame next day; never went in a train but it broke down."

"Now don't, John; pray don't go on so," said Mrs. Baxter, "or I shall really be very angry. Such nonsense! You'll get your step in time. Be patient, like me, major; take things more quietly. I hope you put a direction on that hat-box of yours? Where is the sword-case? If it wasn't for me, major, you'd get to Suez with nothing but the coat on your back."

Just then, the train stopped at Charmont, and in tripped Levison, with his white mackintosh over his arm, and his bundle of umbrellas and sticks.

"No more sovereign points for me!" he said, pro-

ducing a pack of cards. "But if you and the major and Mrs. Baxter would like a rubber — shilling points — I'm for you. Cut for partners."

We assented with pleasure. We cut for partners. I and Mrs. Baxter against the major and Levison. We won nearly every game. Levison played too cautiously, and the major laughed, talked, and always forgot what cards were out.

Still it killed the time; the red and black turned up, changed, and ran into remarkable sequences; and the major's flukes and extraordinary luck in holding (not in playing) cards amused us, we laughed at Levison's punctilious care, and at Mrs. Baxter's avarice for tricks, and were as pleasant a party as the dim lamp of a night-train ever shone on. I could think of little, nevertheless, but my precious boxes.

There we were rushing through France, seeing nothing, heeding nothing, and having as little to do with our means of transit as if we had been four Arabian princes, seated on a flying enchanted carpet.

The game gradually grew more intermittent, the conversation more incessant. Levison, stiff of neckcloth as ever, and imperturbable and punctilious as ever, became chatty. He grew communicative about his business.

"I have at last," he said, in his precise and measured voice, "after years of attention to the subject, discovered the great secret which the waterproofers have so long coveted; how to let out the heated air of the body, and yet at the same time to exclude the rain. On my return to London, I offer this secret to the Mackintosh firm for ten thousand pounds; if they refuse the offer, I at once open a shop in Paris, call

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the new fabric Magentosh, in honour of the emperor's great Italian victory, and sit down and quietly realise a cool million — that's my way!"

"That's the real business tone," said the major, admiringly.

"Ah, major," cried his wife, ever ready to improve a subject, "if you had only had a little of Mr. Levison's prudence and energy, then, indeed, you'd have been colonel of your regiment before this."

Mr. Levison then turned the conversation to the subject of locks.

"I always use the letter-lock myself," he said. "My two talismanic words are TURLURETTE and PAPAGAYO — two names I once heard in an old French farce — who could guess them? It would take the adroitest thief seven hours to decipher even one. You find letter-locks safe, sir?" (He turned to me.)

I replied dryly that I did, and asked what time our train was due at Lyons.

"We are due at Lyons at 4.30," said the major; "it is now five to four. I don't know how it is, but I have a sort of presentiment to-night of some break-down. I am always in for it. When I went tiger-hunting, it was always my elephant that the beast pinned. If some of us were ordered up to an unhealthy out-of-the-way fort, it was always my company. It may be superstitious, I own, but I feel we shall have a break-down before we get to Marseilles. How fast we're going! Only see how the carriage rocks!"

I unconsciously grew nervous, but I concealed it. Could the major be a rogue, planning some scheme against me? But no: his red bluff face, and his clear good-natured guileless eyes, refuted the suspicion.

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"Nonsense, be quiet, major; that's the way you always make a journey disagreeable," said his wife, arranging herself for sleep. Then Levison began talking about his early life, and how, in George the Fourth's time, he was travelling for a cravat house in Bond-street. He grew eloquent in favour of the old costume.

"Low Radical fellows," he said, "run down the first gentleman in Europe, as he was justly called. I respect his memory. He was a wit, and the friend of wits; he was lavishly generous, and disdained poor pitiful economy. He dressed well, sir; he looked well, sir; he was a gentleman of perfect manners. Sir, this is a slovenly and shabby age. When I was young, no gentleman ever travelled without at least two dozen cravats, four whalebone stiffeners, and an iron to smooth the tie, and produce a thin equal edge to the muslin. There were no less, sir, than eighteen modes of putting on the cravat; there was the cravate à la Diane, the cravate à l'Anglaise, the cravate au nœud Gordien, the cravate ——"

The train jolted, moved on, slackened, stopped.

The major thrust his head out of window, and shouted to a passing guard:

"Where are we?"

"Twenty miles from Lyons — Fort Rouge, monsieur."

"What is the matter? Anything the matter?"

An English voice answered from the next window:

"A wheel broken, they tell us. We shall have to wait two hours, and transfer the luggage."

"Good Heaven!" I could not help exclaiming.

Levison put his head out of window. "It is but

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too true," he said, drawing it in again; "two hours' delay at least, the man says. Tiresome, very — but such things will happen on the road; take it coolly. We'll have some coffee and another rubber. We must each look to our own luggage; or, if Mr. Blamyre goes in and orders supper, I'll see to it all. But, good gracious, what is that shining out there by the station lamps? Hei, monsieur!" (to a passing gendarme whom the major had hailed), "what is going on at the station?"

"Monsieur," said the gendarme, saluting, "those are soldiers of the First Chasseurs; they happened to be at the station on their way to Châlons; the station-master has sent them to surround the luggage-van, and see to the transfer of the baggage. No passenger is to go near it, as there are government stores of value in the train."

Levison spat on the ground and muttered execrations to himself: — I supposed at French railways.

"By Jove, sir, did you ever see such clumsy carts?" said Major Baxter, pointing to two country carts, each with four strong horses, that were drawn up under a hedge close to the station; for we had struggled on as far as the first turn-table, some hundred yards from the first houses of the village of Fort Rouge.

Levison and I tried very hard to get near our luggage, but the soldiers sternly refused our approach. It gave me some comfort, however, to see my chests transferred carefully, with many curses on their weight. I saw no sign of government stores, and I told the major so.

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"Oh, they're sharp," he replied, "dooced sharp. Maybe the empress's jewels — one little package only, perhaps; but still not difficult to steal in a night confusion."

Just then there was a shrill piercing whistle, as if a signal. The horses in the two carts tore into a gallop, and flew out of sight.

"Savages, sir; mere barbarians still," exclaimed the major; "unable to use railways even now we've given them to them."

"Major!" said his wife, in a voice of awful reproof, "spare the feelings of these foreigners, and remember your position as an officer and a gentleman."

The major rubbed his hands, and laughed uproariously.

"A pack of infernal idiots," cried Levison; "they can do nothing without soldiers; soldiers here, soldiers there, soldiers everywhere."

"Well, these precautions are sometimes useful, sir," said Mrs. B.; "France is a place full of queer characters. The gentleman next you any day at a table d'hôte may be a returned convict. Major, you remember that case at Cairo three years ago?"

"Cairo, Julia my dear, is not in France."

"I know that, major, I hope. But the house was a French hotel, and that's the same thing." Mrs. B. spoke sharply.

"I shall have a nap, gentlemen. For my part, I'm tired," said the major, as we took our places in the Marseilles train, after three hours' tedious delay. "The next thing will be the boat breaking down, I suppose."

"Major, you wicked man, don't fly out against Providence," said his wife.

Levison grew eloquent again about the Prince Regent, his diamond epaulettes, and his inimitable cravats; but Levison's words seemed to lengthen, and gradually became inaudible to me, until I heard only a soothing murmur, and the rattle and jar of the wheels.

Again my dreams were nervous and uneasy. I imagined I was in Cairo, threading narrow dim streets. where the camels jostled me and the black slaves threatened me, and the air was heavy with musk, and veiled faces watched me from latticed casements above. Suddenly a rose fell at my feet. I looked up, and a face like my Minnie's, only with large liquid dark eyes like an antelope's, glanced forth from behind a water-vase and smiled. At that moment, four Mamelukes appeared, riding down the street at full gallop, and came upon me with their sabres flashing. I dreamed I had only one hope, and that was to repeat the talismanic words of my letter-locks. Already I was under the hoofs of the Mamelukes' horses. I cried out with great difficulty, "Cotopaxo! Cotopaxo!" A rough shake awoke me. It was the major, looking bluff but stern.

"Why, you're talking in your sleep!" he said; "why the devil do you talk in your sleep? Bad habit. Here we are at the breakfast-place."

"What was I talking about?" I asked, with ill-concealed alarm.

"Some foreign gibberish," returned the major.

"Greek, I think," said Levison; "but I was just off too."

We reached Marseilles. I rejoiced to see its almond-

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trees and its white villas. I should feel safer when I was on board ship, and my treasure with me. I was not of a suspicious temperament, but I had thought it remarkable that during that long journey from Lyons to the seaboard, I had never fallen asleep without waking and finding an eye upon me — either the major's or his wife's. Levison had slept during the last four hours incessantly. Latterly, we had all of us grown silent, and even rather sullen. Now we brightened up.

"Hôtel de Londres! Hôtel de l'Univers! Hôtel Impérial!" cried the touts, as we stood round our luggage, agreeing to keep together.

"Hôtel Impérial, of course," said the major; "best house."

A one-eyed saturnine half-caste tout shrunk up to us.

"Hôtel Impérial, sare. I am Hôtel Impérial; all full; not a bed; no — pas de tout — no use, sare!"

"Hang it! the steamer will be the next thing to fail."

"Steamer, sare — accident with boiler; won't start till minuit et vingt minutes — half-past midnight, sare."

"Where shall we go?" said I, turning round and smiling at the three blank faces of my companions. "Our journey seems doomed to be unlucky. Let us redeem it by a parting supper. My telegraphing done, I am free till half-past eleven."

"I will take you," said Levison, "to a small but very decent hotel down by the harbour. The Hôtel des Etrangers."

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"Curséd low nasty crib — gambling place!" said the major, lighting a cheroot, as he got into an open fly.

Mr. Levison drew himself up in his punctilious way. "Sir," he said, "the place is in new hands, or I would not have recommended the house, you may rely upon it."

"Sir," said the major, lifting his broad-brimmed white hat, "I offer you my apologies. I was not aware of that."

"My dear sir, never mention the affair again."

"Major, you're a hot-headed simpleton," were Mrs. B.'s last words, as we drove off together.

As we entered a bare-looking salon with a dinner-table in the middle and a dingy billiard-table at one end, the major said to me, "I shall go and wash and dress for the theatre, and then take a stroll while you do your telegraphing. Go up first, Julia, and see the rooms."

"What slaves we poor women are!" said Mrs. B., as she sailed out.

"And I," said Levison, laying down his railway rug, "shall go out and try and do some business before the shops shut. We have agents here in the Canabière."

"Only two double-bedded rooms, sare," said the one-eyed tout, who stood over the luggage.

"That will do," said Levison, promptly, and with natural irritation at our annoyances. "My friend goes by the boat to-night; he does not sleep here. His luggage can be put in my room, and he can take the key, in case he comes in first."

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"Then now we are all right," said the major. "So far, so good!"

When I got to the telegraph-office, I found a telegram from London awaiting me. To my surprise and horror, it contained only these words:

"You are in great danger. Do not wait a moment. on shore. There is a plot against you. Apply to the prefect for a guard."

It must be the major, and I was in his hands! That rough hearty manner of his was all a trick. Even now, he might be carrying off the chests. I telegraphed back:

"Safe at Marseilles. All right up to this."

Thinking of the utter ruin of our house if I were robbed, and of dear Minnie, I flew back to the hotel, which was situated in a dirty narrow street near the harbour. As I turned down the street, a man darted from a doorway and seized my arm. It was one of the waiters. He said hurriedly, in French: "Quick, quick, monsieur; Major Baxter is anxious to see you, instantly, in the salon. There is no time to lose."

I ran to the hotel, and darted into the salon. There was the major pacing up and down in extraordinary excitement; his wife was looking anxiously out of window. The manner of both was entirely changed. The major ran up and seized me by the hand. "I am a detective officer, and my name is Arnott," he said. "That man Levison is a notorious thief. He is at this moment in his room, opening one of your specie chests. You must help me to nab him. I knew his little game, and have checkmated him. But I wanted to catch him in the act. Julia, finish that brandy-and-water while Mr. Blamyre and myself transact our busi-

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ness. Have you got a revolver, Mr. Blamyre, in case he shows fight? I prefer this." (He pulled out a staff.)

"I have left my revolver in the bedroom," I breathlessly exclaimed.

"That's bad; never mind, he is not likely to hit us in the flurry. He may not even think of it. You must rush at the door at the same moment as I do. These foreign locks are never any good. It's No. 15. Gently!"

We came to the door. We listened a moment. We could hear the sound of money chinking in a bag. Then a low dry laugh, as Levison chuckled over the word he had heard me utter in my sleep. "Cotopaxo — ha! ha!"

The major gave the word, and we both rushed at the door. It shook, splintered, was driven in. Levison, revolver in hand, stood over the open box, ankle deep in gold. He had already filled a huge digger's belt that was round his waist, and a courier's bag that hung at his side. A carpet-bag, half full, lay at his feet, and, as he let it fall to open the window bolt, it gushed forth a perfect torrent of gold. He did not utter a word. There were ropes at the window, as if he had been lowering, or preparing to lower, bags into the side alley. He gave a whistle, and some vehicle could be heard to drive furiously off.

"Surrender, you gallows-bird! I know you," cried the major. "Surrender! I've got you now, old boy."

Levison's only reply was to pull the trigger of the revolver; fortunately, there was no discharge. I had forgotten to cap it.

"The infernal thing is not capped. One for you,

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Bobby," he said quietly. Then hurling it at the major with a sudden fury, he threw open the window and leaped out.

I leaped after him — it was a ground floor room — raising a hue and cry. Arnott remained to guard the money.

A moment more and a wild rabble of soldiers, sailors, mongrel idlers, and porters, were pursuing the flying wretch with screams and hoots, as in the dim light (the lamps were just beginning to be kindled) we tore after him, doubling and twisting like a hare, among the obstacles that crowded the quay. Hundreds of blows were aimed at him; hundreds of hands were stretched to seize him; he wrested himself from one; he felled another; he leaped over a third; a Zouave's clutch was all but on him, when suddenly his foot caught in a mooring ring, and he fell headlong into the harbour. There was a shout as he splashed and disappeared in the dark water, near which the light of only one lamp moved and glittered. I ran down the nearest steps and waited while the gendarmes took a boat and stolidly dragged with hooks for the body.

"They are foxes, these old thieves. I remember this man here at Toulon. I saw him branded. I knew his face again in a moment. He has dived under the shipping, got into some barge and hid. You'll never see him again," said an old grey gendarme who had taken me into the boat.

"Yes we shall, for here he is!" cried a second, stooping down and lifting a body out of the water by the hair.

"Oh, he *was* an artful file," said a man from a boat behind us. It was Arnott. "Just came to see

how you were getting on, sir. It's all right with the money; Julia's minding it. I often said that fellow would catch it some day, now he's got it. He all but had you, Mr. Blamyre. He'd have cut your throat when you were asleep, rather than miss the money. But I was on his track. He didn't know me. This was my first cruise for some time against this sort of rogue. Well; his name is off the books, that's one good thing. Come, comrades, bring that body to land. We must strip him of the money he has upon him, which at least did one good thing while in his possession — it sent the scoundrel to the bottom."

Even in death, the long face looked craftily respectable when we turned it to the lamp-light.

Arnott told me all, in his jovial way, on my return to the hotel, where I loaded him and Mrs. B. (another officer) with thanks. On the night I started he had received orders from the London head office to follow me, and watch Levison. He had not had time to communicate with my partners. The driver of our train had been bribed to make the engine break down at Fort Rouge, where Levison's accomplices were waiting with carts to carry off the luggage in the confusion and darkness, or even during a sham riot and fight. This plan Arnott had frustrated by getting the police to telegraph from Paris, for soldiers to be sent from Lyons, and be kept in readiness, at the station. The champagne he spilt had been drugged. Levison, defeated in his first attempt, had then resolved to try other means. My unlucky disclosure of the mystery of the letter-lock had furnished him with the power of opening that one chest. The break-down of the steamer,

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which was accidental (as far as could ever be ascertained), gave him a last opportunity.

That night, thanks to Arnott, I left Marseilles with not one single piece of money lost. The journey was prosperous. The loan was effected on very profitable terms. Our house has flourished ever since, and Minnie and I have flourished likewise — and increased.

VI.

TO BE TAKEN WITH A GRAIN OF SALT.

I have always noticed a prevalent want of courage, even among persons of superior intelligence and culture, as to imparting their own psychological experiences when those have been of a strange sort. Almost all men are afraid that what they could relate in such wise would find no parallel or response in a listener's internal life, and might be suspected or laughed at. A truthful traveller who should have seen some extraordinary creature in the likeness of a sea-serpent, would have no fear of mentioning it; but the same traveller having had some singular presentiment, impulse, vagary of thought, vision (so-called), dream, or other remarkable mental impression, would hesitate considerably before he would own to it. To this reticence I attribute much of the obscurity in which such subjects are involved. We do not habitually communicate our experiences of these subjective things, as we do our experiences of objective creation. The consequence is, that the general stock of experience in this regard appears exceptional, and really is so, in respect of being miserably imperfect.

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In what I am going to relate I have no intention of setting up, opposing, or supporting, any theory whatever. I know the history of the Bookseller of Berlin, I have studied the case of the wife of a late Astronomer Royal as related by Sir David Brewster, and I have followed the minutest details of a much more remarkable case of Spectral Illusion occurring within my private circle of friends. It may be necessary to state as to this last that the sufferer (a lady) was in no degree, however distant, related to me. A mistaken assumption on that head, might suggest an explanation of a part of my own case — but only a part — which would be wholly without foundation. It cannot be referred to my inheritance of any developed peculiarity, nor had I ever before any at all similar experience, nor have I ever had any at all similar experience since.

It does not signify how many years ago, or how few, a certain Murder was committed in England, which attracted great attention. We hear more than enough of Murderers as they rise in succession to their atrocious eminence, and I would bury the memory of this particular brute, if I could, as his body was buried, in Newgate Jail. I purposely abstain from giving any direct clue to the criminal's individuality.

When the murder was first discovered, no suspicion fell — or I ought rather to say, for I cannot be too precise in my facts, it was nowhere publicly hinted that any suspicion fell — on the man who was afterwards brought to trial. As no reference was at that time made to him in the newspapers, it is obviously impossible that any description of him can at that time

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have been given in the newspapers. It is essential that this fact be remembered.

Unfolding at breakfast my morning paper, containing the account of that first discovery, I found it to be deeply interesting, and I read it with close attention. I read it twice, if not three times. The discovery had been made in a bedroom, and, when I laid down the paper, I was aware of a flash — rush — flow — I do not know what to call it — no word I can find is satisfactorily descriptive — in which I seemed to see that bedroom passing through my room, like a picture impossibly painted on a running river. Though almost instantaneous in its passing, it was perfectly clear; so clear that I distinctly, and with a sense of relief, observed the absence of the dead body from the bed.

It was in no romantic place that I had this curious sensation, but in chambers in Piccadilly, very near to the corner of Saint James's-street. It was entirely new to me. I was in my easy-chair at the moment, and the sensation was accompanied with a peculiar shiver which started the chair from its position. (But it is to be noted that the chair ran easily on castors.) I went to one of the windows (there are two in the room, and the room is on the second floor) to refresh my eyes with the moving objects down in Piccadilly. It was a bright autumn morning, and the street was sparkling and cheerful. The wind was high. As I looked out, it brought down from the Park a quantity of fallen leaves, which a gust took, and whirled into a spiral pillar. As the pillar fell and the leaves dispersed, I saw two men on the opposite side of the way, going from West to East. They were one behind the other. The foremost man often looked back over his shoulder.

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The second man followed him, at a distance of some thirty paces, with his right hand menacingly raised. First, the singularity and steadiness of this threatening gesture in so public a thoroughfare, attracted my attention; and next, the more remarkable circumstance that nobody heeded it. Both men threaded their way among the other passengers, with a smoothness hardly consistent even with the action of walking on a pavement, and no single creature that I could see, gave them place, touched them, or looked after them. In passing before my windows, they both stared up at me. I saw their two faces very distinctly, and I knew that I could recognise them anywhere. Not that I had consciously noticed anything very remarkable in either face, except that the man who went first had an unusually lowering appearance, and that the face of the man who followed him was of the colour of impure wax.

I am a bachelor, and my valet and his wife constitute my whole establishment. My occupation is in a certain Branch Bank, and I wish that my duties as head of a Department were as light as they are popularly supposed to be. They kept me in town that autumn, when I stood in need of change. I was not ill, but I was not well. My reader is to make the most that can be reasonably made of my feeling jaded, having a depressing sense upon me of a monotonous life, and being "slightly dyspeptic." I am assured by my renowned doctor that my real state of health at that time justifies no stronger description, and I quote his own from his written answer to my request for it.

As the circumstances of the Murder, gradually unravelling, took stronger and stronger possession of the

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public mind, I kept them away from mine, by knowing as little about them as was possible in the midst of the universal excitement. But I knew that a verdict of Wilful Murder had been found against the suspected Murderer, and that he had been committed to Newgate for trial. I also knew that his trial had been postponed over one Sessions of the Central Criminal Court, on the ground of general prejudice and want of time for the preparation of the defence. I may further have known, but I believe I did not, when, or about when, the Sessions to which his trial stood postponed would come on.

My sitting-room, bedroom, and dressing-room, are all on one floor. With the last, there is no communication but through the bedroom. True, there is a door in it, once communicating with the staircase; but a part of the fitting of my bath has been — and had then been for some years — fixed across it. At the same period, and as a part of the same arrangement, the door had been nailed up and canvased over.

I was standing in my bedroom late one night, giving some directions to my servant before he went to bed. My face was towards the only available door of communication with the dressing-room, and it was closed. My servant's back was towards that door. While I was speaking to him I saw it open, and a man look in, who very earnestly and mysteriously beckoned to me. That man was the man who had gone second of the two along Piccadilly, and whose face was of the colour of impure wax.

The figure, having beckoned, drew back and closed the door. With no longer pause than was made by my crossing the bedroom, I opened the dressing-room

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door, and looked in. I had a lighted candle already in my hand. I felt no inward expectation of seeing the figure in the dressing-room, and I did not see it there.

Conscious that my servant stood amazed, I turned round to him, and said: "Derrick, could you believe that in my cool senses I fancied I saw a——" As I there laid my hand upon his breast, with a sudden start he trembled violently, and said, "O Lord yes, sir! A dead man beckoning!"

Now, I do not believe that this John Derrick, my trusty and attached servant for more than twenty years, had any impression whatever of having seen any such figure, until I touched him. The change in him was so startling when I touched him, that I fully believe he derived his impression in some occult manner from me at that instant.

I bade John Derrick bring some brandy, and I gave him a dram, and was glad to take one myself. Of what had preceded that night's phenomenon, I told him not a single word. Reflecting on it, I was absolutely certain that I had never seen that face before, except on the one occasion in Piccadilly. Comparing its expression when beckoning at the door, with its expression when it had stared up at me as I stood at my window, I came to the conclusion that on the first occasion it had sought to fasten itself upon my memory, and that on the second occasion it had made sure of being immediately remembered.

I was not very comfortable that night, though I felt a certainty, difficult to explain, that the figure would not return. At daylight, I fell into a heavy

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sleep, from which I was awakened by John Derrick's coming to my bedside with a paper in his hand.

This paper, it appeared, had been the subject of an altercation at the door between its bearer and my servant. It was a summons to me to serve upon a Jury at the forthcoming Sessions of the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey. I had never before been summoned on such a Jury, as John Derrick well knew. He believed — I am not certain at this hour whether with reason or otherwise — that that class of Jurors were customarily chosen on a lower qualification than mine, and he had at first refused to accept the summons. The man who served it had taken the matter very coolly. He had said that my attendance or non-attendance was nothing to him; there the summons was; and I should deal with it at my own peril, and not at his.

For a day or two I was undecided whether to respond to this call, or take no notice of it. I was not conscious of the slightest mysterious bias, influence, or attraction, one way or other. Of that I am as strictly sure as of every other statement that I make here. Ultimately I decided, as a break in the monotony of my life, that I would go.

The appointed morning was a raw morning in the month of November. There was a dense brown fog in Piccadilly, and it became positively black and in the last degree oppressive East of Temple Bar. I found the passages and staircases of the Court House flaringly lighted with gas, and the Court itself similarly illuminated. I *think* that until I was conducted by officers into the Old Court and saw its crowded state, I did not know that the Murderer was to be tried that

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day. I *think* that until I was so helped into the Old Court with considerable difficulty, I did not know into which of the two Courts sitting, my summons would take me. But this must not be received as a positive assertion, for I am not completely satisfied in my mind on either point.

I took my seat in the place appropriated to Jurors in waiting, and I looked about the Court as well as I could through the cloud of fog and breath that was heavy in it. I noticed the black vapour hanging like a murky curtain outside the great windows, and I noticed the stifled sound of wheels on the straw or tan that was littered in the street; also, the hum of the people gathered there, which a shrill whistle, or a louder song or hail than the rest, occasionally pierced. Soon afterwards the Judges, two in number, entered and took their seats. The buzz in the Court was awfully hushed. The direction was given to put the Murderer to the bar. He appeared there. And in that same instant I recognised in him, the first of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly.

If my name had been called then, I doubt if I could have answered to it audibly. But it was called about sixth or eighth in the panel, and I was by that time able to say "Here!" Now, observe. As I stepped into the box, the prisoner, who had been looking on attentively but with no sign of concern, became violently agitated, and beckoned to his attorney. The prisoner's wish to challenge me was so manifest, that it occasioned a pause, during which the attorney, with his hand upon the dock, whispered with his client, and shook his head. I afterwards had it from that gentleman, that the prisoner's first affrighted words to him were,

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"*At all hazards challenge that man!*" But, that as he would give no reason for it; and admitted that he had not even known my name until he heard it called, and I appeared, it was not done.

Both on the ground already explained, that I wish to avoid reviving the unwholesome memory of that Murderer, and also because a detailed account of his long trial is by no means indispensable to my narrative, I shall confine myself closely to such incidents in the ten days and nights during which we, the Jury, were kept together, as directly bear on my own curious personal experience. It is in that, and not in the Murderer, that I seek to interest my reader. It is to that, and not to a page of the Newgate Calendar, that I beg attention.

I was chosen Foreman of the Jury. On the second morning of the trial, after evidence had been taken for two hours (I heard the church clocks strike), happening to cast my eyes over my brother-jurymen, I found an inexplicable difficulty in counting them. I counted them several times, yet always with the same difficulty. In short, I made them one too many.

I touched the brother-juryman whose place was next me, and I whispered to him, "Oblige me by counting us." He looked surprised by the request, but turned his head and counted. "Why," says he, suddenly, "we are Thirt——; but no, it's not possible. No. We are twelve."

According to my counting that day, we were always right in detail, but in the gross we were always one too many. There was no appearance — no figure — to account for it; but I had now an inward foreshadowing of the figure that was surely coming.

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The Jury were housed at the London Tavern. We all slept in one large room on separate tables, and we were constantly in the charge and under the eye of the officer sworn to hold us in safe-keeping. I see no reason for suppressing the real name of that officer. He was intelligent, highly polite, and obliging, and (I was glad to hear) much respected in the City. He had an agreeable presence, good eyes, enviable black whiskers, and a fine sonorous voice. His name was Mr. Harker.

When we turned into our twelve beds at night, Mr. Harker's bed was drawn across the door. On the night of the second day, not being disposed to lie down, and seeing Mr. Harker sitting on his bed, I went and sat beside him, and offered him a pinch of snuff. As Mr. Harker's hand touched mine in taking it from my box, a peculiar shiver crossed him, and he said: "Who is this!"

Following Mr. Harker's eyes and looking along the room, I saw again the figure I expected — the second of the two men who had gone down Piccadilly. I rose, and advanced a few steps; then stopped, and looked round at Mr. Harker. He was quite unconcerned, laughed, and said in a pleasant way, "I thought for a moment we had a thirteenth juryman, without a bed. But I see it is the moonlight."

Making no revelation to Mr. Harker, but inviting him to take a walk with me to the end of the room, I watched what the figure did. It stood for a few moments by the bedside of each of my eleven brother-jurymen, close to the pillow. It always went to the right-hand side of the bed, and always passed out crossing the foot of the next bed. It seemed from the

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action of the head, merely to look down pensively at each recumbent figure. It took no notice of me, or of my bed, which was that nearest to Mr. Harker's. It seemed to go out where the moonlight came in, through a high window, as by an aërial flight of stairs.

Next morning at breakfast, it appeared that everybody present had dreamed of the murdered man last night, except myself and Mr. Harker.

I now felt as convinced that the second man, who had gone down Piccadilly, was the murdered man (so to speak), as if it had been borne into my comprehension by his immediate testimony. But even this took place, and in a manner for which I was not at all prepared.

On the fifth day of the trial, when the case for the prosecution was drawing to a close, a miniature of the murdered man, missing from his bedroom upon the discovery of the deed, and afterwards found in a hiding-place where the Murderer had been seen digging, was put in evidence. Having been identified by the witness under examination, it was handed up to the Bench, and thence handed down to be inspected by the Jury. As an officer in a black gown was making his way with it across to me, the figure of the second man who had gone down Piccadilly, impetuously started from the crowd, caught the miniature from the officer, and gave it to me with its own hands, at the same time saying in a low and hollow tone — before I saw the miniature, which was in a locket — "*I was younger then, and my face was not then drained of blood.*" It also came between me and the brother juryman to whom I would have given the miniature, and between him and the brother juryman to whom he would have given it, and

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so passed it on through the whole of our number, and back into my possession. Not one of them, however, detected this.

At table, and generally when we were shut up together in Mr. Harker's custody, we had from the first naturally discussed the day's proceedings a good deal. On that fifth day, the case for the prosecution being closed, and we having that side of the question in a completed shape before us, our discussion was more animated and serious. Among our number was a vestryman — the densest idiot I have ever seen at large — who met the plainest evidence with the most preposterous objections, and who was sided with by two flabby parochial parasites; all the three empanelled from a district so delivered over to Fever that they ought to have been upon their own trial, for five hundred Murders. When these mischievous blockheads were at their loudest, which was towards midnight while some of us were already preparing for bed, I again saw the murdered man. He stood grimly behind them, beckoning to me. On my going towards them and striking into the conversation, he immediately retired. This was the beginning of a separate series of appearances, confined to that long room in which *we* were confined. Whenever a knot of my brother jurymen laid their heads together, I saw the head of the murdered man among theirs. Whenever their comparison of notes was going against him, he would solemnly and irresistibly beckon to me.

It will be borne in mind that down to the production of the miniature on the fifth day of the trial, I had never seen the Appearance in Court. Three changes occurred, now that we entered on the case for the de-

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fence. Two of them I will mention together, first. The figure was now in Court continually, and it never there addressed itself to me, but always to the person who was speaking at the time. For instance. The throat of the murdered man had been cut straight across. In the opening speech for the defence, it was suggested that the deceased might have cut his own throat. At that very moment, the figure with its throat in the dreadful condition referred to (this it had concealed before) stood at the speaker's elbow, motioning across and across its windpipe, now with the right hand, now with the left, vigorously suggesting to the speaker himself, the impossibility of such a wound having been self-inflicted by either hand. For another instance. A witness to character, a woman, deposed to the prisoner's being the most amiable of mankind. The figure at that instant stood on the floor before her, looking her full in the face, and pointing out the prisoner's evil countenance with an extended arm and an outstretched finger.

The third change now to be added, impressed me strongly, as the most marked and striking of all. I do not theorise upon it; I accurately state it, and there leave it. Although the Appearance was not itself perceived by those whom it addressed, its coming close to such persons was invariably attended by some trepidation or disturbance on their part. It seemed to me as if it were prevented by laws to which I was not amenable, from fully revealing itself to others, and yet as if it could, invisibly, dumbly and darkly, overshadow their minds. When the leading counsel for the defence suggested that hypothesis of suicide and the figure stood at the learned gentleman's elbow, frightfully

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sawing at its severed throat, it is undeniable that the counsel faltered in his speech, lost for a few seconds the thread of his ingenious discourse, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and turned extremely pale. When the witness to character was confronted by the Appearance, her eyes most certainly did follow the direction of its pointed finger, and rest in great hesitation and trouble upon the prisoner's face. Two additional illustrations will suffice. On the eighth day of the trial, after the pause which was every day made early in the afternoon for a few minutes' rest and refreshment, I came back into Court with the rest of the Jury, some little time before the return of the Judges. Standing up in the box and looking about me, I thought the figure was not there, until, chancing to raise my eyes to the gallery, I saw it bending forward and leaning over a very decent woman, as if to assure itself whether the Judges had resumed their seats or not. Immediately afterwards, that woman screamed, fainted, and was carried out. So with the venerable, sagacious, and patient Judge who conducted the trial. When the case was over, and he settled himself and his papers to sum up, the murdered man entering by the Judge's door, advanced to his Lordship's desk, and looked eagerly over his shoulder at the pages of his notes which he was turning. A change came over his Lordship's face; his hand stopped; the peculiar shiver that I knew so well, passed over him; he faltered, "Excuse me, gentlemen, for a few moments. I am somewhat oppressed by the vitiated air;" and did not recover until he had drunk a glass of water.

Through all the monotony of six of those intermin-

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able ten days — the same Judges and others on the bench, the same Murderer in the dock, the same lawyers at the table, the same tones of question and answer rising to the roof of the court, the same scratching of the Judge's pen, the same ushers going in and out, the same lights kindled at the same hour when there had been any natural light of day, the same foggy curtain outside the great windows when it was foggy, the same rain pattering and dripping when it was rainy, the same footmarks of turnkeys and prisoner day after day on the same sawdust, the same keys locking and unlocking the same heavy doors — through all the wearisome monotony which made me feel as if I had been Foreman of the Jury for a vast period of time, and Piccadilly had flourished coevally with Babylon, the murdered man never lost one trace of his distinctness in my eyes, nor was he at any moment less distinct than anybody else. I must not omit, as a matter of fact, that I never once saw the Appearance which I call by the name of the murdered man, look at the Murderer. Again and again I wondered, "Why does he not?" But he never did.

Nor did he look at me, after the production of the miniature, until the last closing minutes of the trial arrived. We retired to consider, at seven minutes before ten at night. The idiotic vestryman and his two parochial parasites gave us so much trouble, that we twice returned into Court, to beg to have certain extracts from the Judge's notes re-read. Nine of us had not the smallest doubt about those passages, neither, I believe, had any one in Court; the dunder-headed triumvirate however, having no idea but obstruction,

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disputed them for that very reason. At length we prevailed, and finally the Jury returned into Court at ten minutes past twelve.

The murdered man at that time stood directly opposite the Jury-box, on the other side of the Court. As I took my place, his eyes rested on me, with great attention; he seemed satisfied, and slowly shook a great grey veil, which he carried on his arm for the first time, over his head and whole form. As I gave in our verdict "Guilty," the veil collapsed, all was gone, and his place was empty.

The Murderer being asked by the Judge, according to usage, whether he had anything to say before sentence of Death should be passed upon him, indistinctly muttered something which was described in the leading newspapers of the following day as "a few rambling, incoherent, and half-audible words, in which he was understood to complain that he had not had a fair trial, because the Foreman of the Jury was prepossessed against him." The remarkable declaration that he really made, was this: "*My Lord, I knew I was a doomed man when the Foreman of my Jury came into the box. My Lord, I knew he would never let me off, because, before I was taken, he somehow got to my bedside in the night, woke me, and put a rope round my neck.*"

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VII.

TO BE TAKEN AND TRIED.

There can hardly be seen anywhere, a prettier village than Cumner, standing on the brow of a hill which commands one of the finest views in England, and flanked by its broad breezy common, the air of which is notorious for clearness and salubrity. The high road from Dring, for the most part shut in by the fences of gentlemen's seats, opens out when it reaches this common, and, separating from the Tenelms road, ascends in a north-westerly direction till it comes in sight of Cumner. Every step is against the collar, yet so gradual is the ascent, that you scarcely realise it until, turning, you behold the magnificent panorama spread around and beneath.

The village consists chiefly of one short street of somewhat straggling houses, among which you observe its little post-office, its police station, its rustic public-house (the Dunstan Arms), whose landlord also holds the general shop across the way; and its two or three humble lodging-houses. Facing you as you enter the street, which is a cul-de-sac, is the quaint old church, standing not more than a bow-shot from the Rectory. There is something primitive and almost patriarchal in this quiet village, where the pastor lives surrounded by his flock, and can scarcely move from his own gate without finding himself in the midst of them.

Cumner Common is skirted on three sides by dwellings, varying in size and importance, from the small butcher's shop standing in its own garden, and under

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the shadow of its own apple-trees, to the pretty white house where the curate lodges, and the more pretentious abodes of those who are, or consider themselves, gentry. It is bounded on the east by the low stone wall and gateway of Mr. Malcolmson's domain; the modest dwelling of Simon Eade, that gentleman's bailiff, half covered with creepers, the autumnal hues of which might rival the brightest specimens of American foliage; lastly, by the high brick wall (with its door in the centre), which completely shuts in Mr. Gibbs's "place." On the south side runs the high road to Tenelms, skirting the great Southanger property, of which Sir Oswald Dunstan is proprietor.

Hardly could the pedestrian tourist, on his way from Dring, fail to pause at the rustic stile nearly opposite the blacksmith's forge, and, resting upon it, gaze down on the magnificent prospect of wood and water spread at his feet — a prospect to which two ancient cedars form no inappropriate foreground. That stile is not often crossed, for the footpath from it leads only to the farm called the Plashetts; but it is very constantly used as a resting-place. Many an artist has sketched the view from it; many a lover has whispered tender words to his mistress beside it; many a weary tramp has rested his or her feet on the worn stone beneath.

This stile was once the favourite resort of two young lovers, inhabitants of the district, and soon to be united. George Eade, the only son of Mr. Malcolmson's bailiff, was a stalwart good-looking young fellow of some six-and-twenty, who worked for that gentleman under his father, and was in the receipt of liberal wages. Honest, steady, and fond of self-cultivation, he was

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capable, if not clever — persevering, if not rapid — an excellent specimen of an honest English peasant. But he had certain peculiarities of disposition and temper, which served to render him considerably less popular than his father. He was reserved; feeling strongly, but with difficulty giving expression to his feelings; susceptible to, and not easily forgiving, injuries; singularly addicted to self-accusation and remorse. His father, a straightforward open-hearted man of five-and-forty, who had raised himself by sheer merit from the position of a labourer to that of the trusted manager of Mr. Malcolmson's property, was highly respected by that gentleman, and by the whole country-side. His mother, feeble in health, but energetic of spirit, was one of the most excellent of women.

This couple, like many of their class, had married imprudently early, and had struggled through many difficulties in consequence: burying, one after another, three sickly children in the little churchyard at Cumner where they hoped one day themselves to lie. On the one son that remained to them their affections were centred. The mother, especially, worshipped her George with an admiring love that partook of idolatry. She was not without some of the weaknesses of her sex. She was jealous; and when she discovered the flame which had been kindled in the heart of her son by the soft blue eyes of Susan Archer, her feelings towards that rosy-cheeked damsel were not those of perfect charity. True, the Archers were people who held themselves high, occupying a large farm under Sir Oswald Dunstan; and they were known to regard Susan's attachment as a decided lowering of herself and them. That attachment had sprung up, as is not unfre-

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quently the case, in the hop-gardens. The girl had been ailing for some time, and her shrewd old doctor assured her father that there was no tonic so efficacious as a fortnight's hop-picking in the sunny September weather. Now there were but few places to which so distinguished a belle as Susan could be permitted to go for such a purpose; but her family knew and respected the Eades, and to Mr. Malcolmson's hop-grounds she was accordingly sent. The tonic prescribed produced the desired effect. She lost her ailments; but she lost her heart too.

George Eade was good looking, and up to that time had never cared for woman. The love he conceived for the gentle, blue-eyed girl was of that all-absorbing character which natures stern and concentrated like his, are fitted to feel, and to feel but once in a lifetime. It carried all before it. Susan was sweet tempered and simple hearted, of a yielding disposition, and, though not unconscious of her beauty, singularly little spoilt by the consciousness. She gave her whole heart to the faithful earnest man whom she reverenced as her superior in moral strength, if not in outward circumstances. They exchanged no rings on the balmy evening which witnessed their plighted faith, but he took from her hat the garland of hops she had laughingly twisted round it, and looking down upon her sweet face with a great love in his brown eyes, whispered, "I shall keep this whilst I live, and have it buried with me when I die!"

But, there was a certain Geoffrey Gibbs, the owner of the "Place" on Cumner Common, who had paid, and was still paying, marked attention to the beautiful Susan. This man, originally in trade, had chanced,

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some years before, to see in the newspapers a notice that if he would apply to a certain lawyer in London, he would hear of something greatly to his advantage. He did so, and the result was, his acquisition of a comfortable independence, left him by a distant kinsman whom he had never so much as seen. This windfall changed his whole prospects and manner of life, but not his character, which had always been that of an unmitigated snob. In outward circumstances, however, he was a gentleman living on his income, and, as such, the undoubted social superior of the Archers who were simply tenant-farmers. Hence their desire that Susan should favour his suit. Some people were of opinion, that he had no serious intention of marrying the girl; and Susan herself always encouraged this notion; adding, that were he ten times as rich, and a hundred times as devoted as he represented himself to be, she would die rather than accept the cross-grained monster.

He *was* frightful; less from defects of feature than from utter disproportion of form, and a sinister expression of countenance, far worse than actual ugliness. His legs were as short as his body and hands were long, while his head would have been well suited to the frame of a Hercules; giving him a top-heavy appearance that was singularly ungraceful. His eyebrows were shaggy and overhanging, his eyes small and malicious looking, his nose was beak-shaped, his mouth immense, with thick sensual lips. He wore huge false-looking chains, outrageous shirt-pins and neckcloths, and cutaway sporting coats of astounding colours. He was a man who delighted in frightening inoffensive females, in driving within an inch of a

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lady's pony-carriage, or in violently galloping past some timid girl on horseback, and chuckling at her scared attempts to restrain her plunging steed. Like all bullies, he was of course a coward at heart.

Between this man and George Eade a keen hatred existed. George despised as well as detested Gibbs. Gibbs envied as much as he abhorred the more fortunate peasant, who was beloved where he met with nothing but coldness and rebuffs.

Susan's heart was indeed wholly George's, yet it was only when her health had again begun to fail, that her father was frightened into a most unwilling consent to their union; which consent no sooner became known to Mr. Malcolmson, than he voluntarily raised the young man's wages, and undertook to put in repair for him a cottage of his own, not far from that of Simon Eade.

But, when the news of the approaching marriage reached the ears of Gibbs, his jealous fury was aroused to the utmost. He rushed down to the Plashetts, and, closeting himself with Mr. Archer, made brilliant offers of settlement on Susan, if she would consent even now to throw over her lover, and become his wife. But he only succeeded in distressing the girl, and tantalising her father. Willingly, indeed, would the latter have acceded to his wishes, but he had passed his solemn word to George, and Susan held him to it. No sooner, however, was Gibbs gone, than the old man burst into loud lamentations over what he called her self-sacrifice; and her eldest brother coming in, joined in reproaching her for refusing prospects so advantageous. Susan was weak, and easily influenced. She was cut to the heart by their cruel words, and

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went out to meet her lover with her spirits depressed, and her eyes red and swollen. George, shocked at her appearance, listened with indignation to her agitated recital of what had passed.

"Keep your carriage, indeed!" he exclaimed, with bitter scorn. "Does your father make more count of a one-horse shay than of true love such as mine? And a fellow like Gibbs, too! That I wouldn't trust a dog with!"

"Father don't see it so," the girl sobbed out. "Father says he'd make a very good husband, once we was married. And I'd be a lady, and dress fine, and have servants! Father thinks so much of that!"

"So it seems; but don't you be led by him, Susan, darling! 'Tisn't riches and fine clothes that makes folks' happiness — 'tis better things! See here, my girl —" He stopped short, and faced her with a look of unutterable emotion. "I love ye so true, that if I thought — if I thought it'd be for your good to marry this fellow — if I thought ye'd be happier with him than with me, I'd — I'd give ye up, Susan! Yes — and never come near ye more! I would indeed!"

He paused, and, raising his hand with a gesture that had in it a rude solemnity very impressive, repeated once more, "*I would indeed!* But ye'd not be happy with Geoffrey Gibbs. Ye'd be miserable — ill-used, perhaps. He ain't a man to make any woman happy — I'm as sure o' that, as that I stand here. He's bad at heart — downright cruel. And I! — what I promise, I'll act up to — O! steady. I'll work for you, and slave for you, and — and love you true!"

He drew her towards him as he spoke, and she,

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reassured by his words, nestled lovingly to his side. And so they walked on for some moments in silence.

"And, darling," he added, presently, "I've that trust — that faith — in me — that once we're married, and you're mine — safe — so's no one can come between us, I'll get on; and who knows but ye may ride in your carriage yet. Folks do get on, when they've a mind to, serious."

She looked up at him with fond admiring eyes. She honoured him for his strength, all the more because of her own weakness.

"I don't want no carriage," she murmured; "I want nothing but you, George. 'Tisn't I, you know, that wish things different — 'tis father —"

The moon had risen, the beautiful bright September moon, nearly at the full; and its light shone on the lovers as they retraced their steps through the silent Southanger woods — how solemn and lovely at that hour! — towards Susan's home. And before they had reached the gate of the Plashetts, her sweet face was again bright with smiles, and it had been agreed between them that to avoid a repetition of such attempts on the part of Gibbs, and such scenes with her father, she should propose to go to her aunt's, Miss Jane Archer's, at Ormiston, for a fortnight of the three weeks that yet remained before the marriage should take place.

She acted on this idea, and George took advantage of her absence to attend a sale on the other side of the county, and procure certain articles of furniture required for their new home. Once away, he obtained leave to prolong his stay with a friend till the time of Susan's return. It was pleasanter for him not to be

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at home at this period. His mother seemed to grow more averse to his marriage, the nearer it approached; declaring that no good could possibly come of union with a girl who had been too much waited upon and flattered, to make a good wife for a plain hard-working man. These remarks, indescribably galling to the lover because not wholly without foundation, had given rise to more than one dispute between his mother and him, which had not tended to diminish the half-unconscious dislike the good woman felt towards her future daughter-in-law.

When George returned home after his fortnight's holiday, he found, instead of the expected letter from his betrothed announcing her arrival at the Plashetts, one addressed to him in a strange hand, and containing the following words:

"George Eade, you are being done. Look to G. G. "A WELL-WISHER."

Perplexed at so mysterious a communication, he was somewhat annoyed to find that Gibbs had quitted Cumner from the very day after his own departure, and was still absent. This struck him as remarkable; but Susan had written him only a week before, a letter so full of tenderness that he could not bring himself to entertain a single doubt of her truth. But on the very next morning, his mother handed him a letter from Farmer Archer, enclosing one from his sister, informing him that her niece had left her house clandestinely two days before, to be married to Mr. Gibbs. It appeared that the girl had gone, as on previous occasions, to spend the day with a cousin, and that not re-

turning at night, it was concluded she had settled to sleep there. The next morning had brought, instead of herself, the announcement of her marriage.

On reading this news, George was at first conscious of but one feeling. Utter incredulity. There must be some error somewhere; the thing could not be. While his father, with tears in his honest eyes, exhorted him to bear up like a man under this blow, and his mother indignantly declared that a girl who could so conduct herself was indeed a good riddance, he sat silent, half stupefied. Such a breach of faith seemed, to his earnest and loyal nature, simply impossible.

Another half-hour brought confirmation that could not be doubted. James Wilkins, Mr. Gibbs's man-servant, came grinning and important, with a letter for George, which had been enclosed in one from his master to himself. It was from Susan, and signed with her new name.

"I know," it said, "that for what I have done, I shall be without excuse in your eyes — that you will hate and despise me as much as you have hitherto loved and trusted me. I know that I have behaved to you very, very bad, and I don't ask you to forgive me. I know you can't. But I do ask you to refrain from vengeance. It can't bring back the past. Oh, George! if ever you cared for me, listen to what I entreat now. Hate and despise me — I don't expect no other — but don't you revenge my ill conduct on anyone. Forget all about me — that's the best thing for both of us. It would have been better if we had never beheld one another."

Much more followed in the same strain — weak,

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self-accusing, fearful of consequences — wholly unworthy of George.

He gazed at the letter, holding it in those strong sinewy hands that would have toiled for her so hard and so faithfully. Then, without a word, he held it out to his father, and left the room. They heard him mount the narrow stairs, lock himself into his little garret, and they heard no more.

After a while his mother went to him. Although personally relieved at her son's release, that feeling was entirely absorbed in tender and loving pity for what she knew must be his sufferings. He was sitting by the little casement, a withered branch of hops upon his knee. She went and laid her cheek to his.

"Have patience, lad!" she said, with earnest feeling. "Try — try — to have faith, and comfort'll be sent ye in time. It's hard to bear, I know — dreadful hard and bitter — but for the poor parents' sakes who loves ye so dear, try and bear it."

He looked up at her with cold tearless eyes. "I will," he said, in a hard voice. "Don't ye see I *am* trying?"

His glance was dull and hopeless. How she longed that tears would come and relieve his heart!

"She wasn't worthy of ye, my boy. I always told ye —"

But he stopped her with a stern gesture.

"Mother! Not a word o' that, nor of her, from this hour. What she's done ain't so very bad after all. *I'm* all right — *I* am. Father and you shan't see no difference in me, leastways, not if you'll forbear naming of her ever, ever again. She's turned my heart to stone, that's all! No great matter!"

He laid his hand on his broad chest and heaved a great gasping sigh. "This morning I had a heart o' flesh here," he said; "now it's a cold, heavy stone. But it's no great matter."

"Oh, don't ye speak like that, my lad!" his mother cried, bursting into tears, and throwing her arms around him. "It kills me to hear ye!"

But he gently unwound those arms, and kissing her on the cheek, led her to the door. "I must go to work now," he said; and, descending the stairs before her, he quitted the cottage with a firm step.

From that hour no one heard him speak of Susan Gibbs. He never inquired into the circumstances of her stay at Ormiston; he never spoke of them, nor of her, to her relations or to his own. He avoided the former; he was silent and reserved with the latter. Susan appeared to be, for him, as though she had never been.

And from that hour he was an altered being. He went about his work as actively, and did it as carefully, as ever; but it was done sternly, doggedly, like an imperative but unwelcome duty. No man ever saw a smile upon his lips; no jocular word ever escaped them. Grave and uncompromising, he went his ungenial way, seeking for no sympathy, and bestowing none, avoiding all companionship save that of his parents; — a sad and solitary man.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gibbs's "Place" on Cumner Common was advertised as to be let; strangers hired it, and for nearly three years nothing was seen of him or of his wife. Then news arrived one day that they were to be expected shortly, and quite a ferment of expectation was created in the little village. They came,

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and certain rumours that had reached it from time to time were found to have only too much foundation in truth.

For it had oozed out, as such things do ooze, that Gibbs shamefully ill used his pretty wife, and that the marriage, which on his side had been one of love, had turned out miserably. Her father and brothers, who had been to see them more than once, had been strangely reserved on the subject of those visits, and it was generally understood that the old farmer lamented his daughter's marriage now, as much as he had formerly longed for it. No one wondered, when they saw her. She was the shadow of her former self; still lovely, but broken, cowed, pale; all the bloom faded; all the spirit crushed out of her. No smile was ever seen upon those pretty lips now, except when she played with her boy, a fair-haired little fellow, the image of herself. But even in her intercourse with this child she was sternly restricted, and her tyrant would not unfrequently dismiss him with an oath, and forbid her to follow him to his nursery.

In spite of their being such near neighbours, the Gibbses had been some time in the place before George met his former love. He never went to Cumner church (nor to any, indeed), and she never quitted her own house, except to drive with her husband, or walk through the Southanger Woods to her father's. George might have beheld her driving past his father's door with a high-stepping horse that always seemed on the point of running away; but he never looked at her, nor replied to his mother's remarks respecting her and her smart turn-out. Yet though he resolutely kept the door of his own lips, he could not close the lips of other

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people, or his own ears. Do what he would, the Gibbses and their doings pursued him still. His master's labourers gossiped about the husband's brutality; the baker's boy had no end of stories to tell, of the oaths he had heard, and even the blows he had witnessed, when "Gibbs was more than usual excited with drink." The poor frightened wife was understood to have declared that but for her dread of what he might be driven to do in his fury, she would go before a magistrate and swear the peace against him. George could not close his ears to all this; and men said that the expression of his eyes on those occasions was not good to look upon.

One Sunday, the Eades were sitting over their frugal one o'clock dinner, when they heard the sound of a carriage driving furiously past. Mrs. Eade caught up her stick, and, in spite of her lameness, hobbled to the window.

"I thought so!" she cried. "It's Gibbs driving to Tenelms, and drunk again, seemingly. See how he's flogging of the horse. And he's got the little lad, too! He'll not rest till he've broken that child's neck, or the mother's. Simmons declares ——"

She stopped, suddenly aware of her son's breath upon her cheek. He had actually come to the window, and now, leaning over her, was gazing sternly at the figures in the carriage, flying down the hill towards the Tenelms road.

"I wish he might break his own neck!" George muttered between his teeth.

"Oh, George! George! don't name such things," Mrs. Eade cried, with a pale shocked face. "It ain't

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Christian. We've all need of repentance, and our times is in His hand."

"If ye frequented church, my lad, 'stead of keeping away, as I grieve to see ye do," his father said, severely, "ye'd have better feelings in your heart. *They'll* never prosper ye, mark my words."

George had returned to his seat, but he rose again as his father said this. "Church!" he cried, in a loud harsh voice — "I was going there once, and it wasn't permitted. I'll go there no more. D'ye think," he continued, while his white lips trembled with uncontrollable emotion — "d'ye think, because I'm quiet, and do my work reg'lar, d'ye think I've forgotten? *Forgotten!*" He brought his clenched fist down upon the table with startling violence. "I tell ye when I forget, I'll be lying stark and stiff in my coffin! Let be — let be!" as his mother tried to interrupt him; "ye mean well, I know, but women haven't the judgment to tell when to speak, and when to hold hard. Ye'd best never name that scoundrel 'fore me again, nor yet church." With that, he went from the room and from the house.

Mrs. Eade fretted sadly over these evidences of George's rancorous and ungodly disposition. To her, he seemed to be on the high road to perdition, and she ended by sending to Mr. Murray, the rector, to beg he would be pleased to look in upon her some morning soon, as she was greatly troubled in her mind. But Mr. Murray was at that time ill, and nearly a fortnight elapsed before he was able to answer her summons. Meanwhile, other events occurred.

It was notorious that one of Mrs. Gibbs's greatest trials was about her boy, whom her husband persisted

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in driving out, at the risk, as every one thought, of his life. Fearful had been the scenes between the parents on this account; but the more she wept and implored, the more he resisted her entreaties. One day, to frighten her still more, he placed the little fellow, with the whip in his hand, on the carriage-seat alone, and stood at his door himself, loosely holding the reins, and jeering at his wife, who in an agony of terror kept beseeching him to get in, or to let her do so. Suddenly the report of a gun was heard in a neighbouring field; the horse took fright, and started off wildly, jerking the reins from the hands of the half-intoxicated Gibbs; the whip fell from the hands of the child on the animal's back, still further exciting it; and the boy, thrown with violence to the bottom of the carriage, lay half stunned by the shock.

George was close by when this occurred. He threw himself on the flying horse, and, seizing the bearing-rein with his whole strength, held on like grim death, in spite of being half dragged, half borne, along in its headlong flight. At last the animal, getting its legs entangled in the long trailing reins, fell with fearful violence, and lay stunned and motionless. George was thrown to the ground, but escaped with a few trifling bruises. The child at the bottom of the carriage, though frightened and screaming, was altogether uninjured. In less than five minutes half the village was collected on the spot, inquiring, congratulating, applauding; and Susan, with her rescued child clinging to her bosom, was covering George's hands with passionate tears and kisses.

"Bless you! Bless you a thousand times!" she cried, sobbing hysterically. "You've saved my darling's

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life! He might have been killed but for you! How can I ever ——"

But a rough hand shoved her aside. "What are you after now?" Gibbs's furious voice was heard to cry, with a shocking oath. "Leave that fellow alone, or I'll ——! Are you making a fool of yourself this way, because he's lamed the horse so that he'll have to be shot?"

The poor thing sank down on the bank and broke into a fit of hysterical weeping; whilst a murmur of "Shame, shame!" rose among the bystanders.

George Eade had turned coldly from Susan when she rushed up to him, and had striven to withdraw his hands from her grasp; but now, confronting Gibbs, he said, "It'll be a good deed done, whoever shoots that brute of yours, and it'd be a better still to shoot *you* as a man would a mad dog!"

All heard the words. All trembled at his look as he uttered them. The whole of the pent-up rage and resentment of the last three years seemed concentrated in that one look of savage and unutterable hatred.

Mr. Murray found poor Mrs. Eade very suffering, when, two mornings after, he called to congratulate her on her son's escape. She had not closed her eyes since the accident. George's look and words, as they had been described to her, haunted her. The good clergyman could give her but scant comfort. He had tried again and again to reason with and soften her son, but ineffectually. George answered him, with a certain rude respect, that as long as he did his work properly, and injured no man, he had a right to decide for himself in matters concerning only himself; and one of his

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fixed decisions was never again to see the inside of a church.

"It's a hard trial, my good friend," said Mr. Murray, "a hard and mysterious trial. But I say to you, *have faith.* There is a hidden good in it, that we can't see now."

"It'd be strange if I wasn't thankful for his being spared," Mrs. Eade replied. "It'd be worse than anything to have the dear lad took, revengeful and unforgiving as he is now. But you see, sir ——"

She was stopped in her eager speech by a knock at the door. The son of Mr. Beach, the neighbouring butcher, peeped in. He scraped a bow on seeing the clergyman sitting with her, and looked from one to the other with a doubtful demeanour.

"I don't want nothing this morning, thank you, Jim," Mrs. Eade said. Then, struck with the peculiar expression of the young man's face, she added: "Ain't Mr. Beach so well this morning? You look all nohow."

"I'm — I'm a bit flustered," the youth replied, wiping his steaming forehead; "I've just been seeing *him*, and it gave me such a turn!"

"Him! who?"

"Sure! Haven't ye heard, sir? Gibbs have been found dead in Southanger Woods — murdered last night. They say ——"

"Gibbs murdered!"

There was a pause of breathless horror.

"They've been carrying his corpse to the Dunstan Arms, and I see it."

Mrs. Eade turned so deadly faint that the clergyman called out hurriedly for Jemima, the servant girl. But

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Jemima had run out wildly on hearing the appalling intelligence, and was now midway between her master's house and the Gibbs's, listening to a knot of people, all wondering, surmising, gazing with scared eyes at that door in the high wall, the threshold of which its master would never cross again, except feet foremost.

The Eades' parlour was soon full to overflowing. Most of the dwellers on the common had congregated there — why, perhaps none would have cared to explain. Simon Eade came in among the first, and was doing his best to soothe and restore the poor fainting woman, who could hardly as yet realise what had occurred. In the midst of the confusion — the questioning, the describing of the position of the body, the rifled pockets, the dreadful blow from behind, the number of hours since the deed was done — in the midst of all this, steps were heard outside, and George came into the midst of them.

Then a sudden hush succeeded to the Babel of sounds, which he could not but have heard as he crossed the threshold. There was something ominous in that silence.

No need to ask if he knew. His face, pale as death, haggard, streaming with perspiration, proved all too plainly he was aware of the ghastly horror. But his first words, low, and uttered half unconsciously, were long after remembered:

"I WISH I'D BEEN FOUND DEAD IN THAT WOOD 'STEAD OF GIBBS!"

Various circumstances arose, one after another, that united to surround George with a kind of network of suspicion. Simon Eade sustained himself like a man,

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with a proud confidence in the innocence of his boy, touching even those who could not share it; and with a pious trust that Providence would yet see that innocence proved. But the poor feeble mother, shaken by ill health, half crazed by the remembrance of words and looks she would give the world to forget, could do little but weep, and utter broken supplications to Heaven.

George offered no resistance on his apprehension. Sternly, but without eagerness, he declared his innocence, and from that moment he kept entire silence. His features worked convulsively when he wrung his father's hand on parting, and gazed on the pale face of his mother, who had swooned away on seeing the police; but he soon recovered his self-possession, and accompanied the officers with a steady step, and a fixed, though gloomy countenance.

The body of the deceased had been discovered about ten A.M. by a farmer going to the Plashetts, who had been attracted to the spot by the howls of Gibbs's dog. The corpse lay among the underwood, at a short distance from the footpath leading from the stile so often mentioned, through the wood to the Plashetts, and had apparently been dragged that short distance. Evidences of a fierce struggle were visible on and around the footpath, and some blood also: which appeared to have flowed from a wound in the back of the head of the deceased, who must have been struck from behind, by some heavy, though not blunt, instrument. When found, he had been dead, according to the medical testimony, some eleven or twelve hours. The pockets were turned inside out, and the watch and a purse had been taken, as well as a seal ring.

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Gibbs's two servants, James and Bridget Williams, deposed that their master had quitted his own house on the night of the murder, at twenty minutes past eight, being unusually sober; that he had set his watch, the last thing, by the kitchen clock, and had observed that he should go to the Dunstan Arms first, and afterwards to the Plashetts. That his not returning that night had occasioned no uneasiness, as he was in the habit of frequently absenting himself until morning, and had his latch-key always with him.

On the other hand, Simon Eade, his wife, and servant girl, all deposed that George returned home on the night of the murder, at nine o'clock, having been out since tea-time; that there was nothing unusual in either his manner or appearance; that he supped, and afterwards remained with his parents till ten, when the whole family retired to bed; and that he came down next morning in the sight of Jemima, who had herself risen somewhat earlier than usual.

On his left wrist was found a recent cut, which he stated had been caused by his clasp-knife slipping, as he was cutting his bread and cheese. In the same manner he sought to account for certain marks of blood on the inside of his coat sleeves and on his trousers. The only article belonging to the deceased that was found in his possession was a small lead pencil, marked with the initials "G. G." and three notches; these Job Brettle, the blacksmith, swore Gibbs had handed him the pencil to cut, on the afternoon of the murder. He (Brettle) noticed both notches and initials at the time, and could swear that the pencil in the prisoner's possession was the pencil he had cut. George maintained

that he had picked it up on the common, and that he had no idea to whom it belonged.

It came out in cross-examination that a more desperate quarrel than ever, had taken place on the morning of the murder, between Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs; after which, she had been heard to declare that she could support that life no longer, and would apply for help to one who would not refuse it. That she had sent a letter soon after to George Eade, by the son of a neighbouring cottager, and had gone out herself at night, a few minutes after her husband, returning again in a quarter of an hour, more or less, when she had retired to her bedroom, and had not again quitted it until news was brought next morning of the discovery of the corpse.

When questioned by the coroner as to where she had been overnight, no reply could be elicited from her; but she fainted so frequently while under examination, that her evidence was singularly broken and incoherent.

George admitted having gone to the Southanger Woods at about twenty minutes to eight on the night of the murder; but he refused to assign any special reason for going there, declaring that he had not remained there more than a quarter of an hour at most. He stated that, as he was re-crossing the stile, he saw Gibbs and his dog at a distance, making directly for it. The moon shone almost as bright as day, and he recognised him distinctly. To avoid meeting him, he took the Dring road, and walked nearly as far as the turnpike, when he turned about, and so reached home at nine o'clock without having met a soul.

The following were (briefly) the points in the prisoner's favour:

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1. The evidence of three credible witnesses that he returned home at nine o'clock, and sat down to supper without any appearance of hurry or agitation.

2. The shortness of the time in which to commit such a deed, and effectually to conceal the property taken from the deceased.

3. The high moral character borne by the prisoner up to that time.

The points against him were:

1. The cut on his wrist, and marks of blood on his clothes.

2. Gibbs's pencil, found upon him.

3. The absence of testimony corroborative of his own account of his doings during the thirty minutes that intervened between Gibbs's leaving the Dunstan Arms (where he had gone straight from home) and his (George's) own return to his father's.

4. The bitter animosity he was known to cherish against the deceased, and certain words he had been heard to utter respecting him, indicating a desire for his life.

By the evidence of the landlord of the Dunstan Arms, it appeared that Gibbs had left his place to proceed to the Plashetts, at a few minutes before half-past eight o'clock. Now, it would take some four or five minutes' moderate walking for one leaving the public-house, to reach the spot where Gibbs's body was found; thus reducing the period for the murder to be committed in (if committed by George at that time) to three or four and twenty minutes, if he ran home at his full speed, or to nineteen or twenty minutes, if he walked at an average pace.

The demeanour of the prisoner before the magis-

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trates, was stern, and even defiant; but he betrayed no emotion. He was fully committed for trial at the approaching assizes.

Meanwhile, opinion respecting him was greatly divided in Cumner. He had never been a popular man, and his extreme reserve during the last three years had alienated many who, at the period of his great trouble, had been disposed to sympathise with him. And, although he had always held a high place in public estimation, the impression that he was a man of unusually fierce passions, and implacable resentment, had gained ground of late. In short, not a few of those who knew him best, believed that, worked up to savage fury by the sufferings of the woman he had once so fondly loved, and by long brooding over his own wrongs, he had revenged both himself and her by taking the life of his enemy. He might, it was thought, have easily slipped out of his father's house in the dead of night, have waylaid and murdered Gibbs as he was returning from the Plashetts, and have secreted or destroyed the property in order to throw suspicion off the right scent.

His trial will long be remembered in those parts, as well from the intense excitement it occasioned in that particular locality, as from the strong interest manifested about it throughout the kingdom. The most eminent counsel were engaged on his behalf; and Mr. Malcolmson, who never could believe in his guilt, spared neither pains nor expense to aid his cause. He was perfectly calm when he stood in the dock, the one object on which countless eyes were eagerly riveted; but the change that had taken place in his outward seeming, struck even the most indifferent beholder with

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compassion, and possibly did more to impress the jury in his favour, than even the eloquence of his counsel, wonderful as that proved. For, his sufferings must have been intense. He had grown years older, during the last few weeks. His hair had thinned; his clothes hung upon his attenuated frame. He, once so ruddy and vigorous, stood there wan, haggard, drooping. Even the expression of his countenance had altered; it was stern no more.

A sound like one vast sobbing sigh went through the crowded court when the verdict, Not Guilty, was heard; but no applause, no public mark of joy or gratulation. And silently, with downcast eyes, like a doomed man, George Eade returned with one parent to the home where the other sat praying for his release.

It had been expected that, if acquitted, he would leave Cumner, and seek his fortunes elsewhere. But it was consistent with the character of the man, to brave the opinion of his fellows, and he did so in this instance. On the first Sunday, to the surprise of all, he made his appearance in church, sitting apart from the rest of the congregation, as though unwilling to obtrude himself upon them; from that time his attendance was invariable. Nor was this the only change observable in his conduct. His moroseness had passed away. He had become subdued, patient, manifesting a touching gratitude to those who treated him with common civility, as though he felt himself unworthy of their notice; unremitting in his devotion to his parents; working hard all the day; sometimes puzzling over a book at night; never alluding to the past — never forgetting it; melancholy — more melancholy

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than ever; but no longer bitter nor resentful. Such had George Eade become; and when men saw him at a distance, they followed him with their eyes, and asked one another in a whisper, "Did he do it?"

He and Susan never met. She long lay dangerously ill at her father's house, whither she had removed after the tragical event. And the old farmer was fitly punished for his sordid coveting of Gibbs's wealth, when it was found that the latter had settled only fifty pounds a year upon his wife, to be forfeited altogether if she should make a second marriage.

It was about a twelvemonth after these events that, one bright moonlight night, as Mr. Murray was sitting in his library alone, his servant entered to inform him that a stranger, who gave his name as Luke Williams, desired to speak with him. It was past ten o'clock, and the clergyman's hours were early and regular.

"Tell him to call to-morrow morning," said he; "this is not a fit hour for business."

"I did tell him so, sir," the man replied; "but he declared his was a business that would not wait an hour."

"Is he a beggar?"

"He didn't beg, sir; but he looks shocking, quite shocking ——"

"Show him in."

The man entered; truly a shocking object. Pale, hollow-eyed, cadaverous, with a racking cough that caused him to pant and gasp for breath, he looked like one in the last stage of consumption. He gazed at Mr. Murray with a strange and mournful expression, and Mr. Murray gazed at him.

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"Well?"

The stranger glanced at the servant.

"Leave the room, Robert."

Robert did so, but remained in close proximity outside.

"This is a strange hour at which to disturb me. Have you something to say?"

"It *is* a strange hour, sir, for coming; but my reason for coming is stranger."

The man turned to the window, the curtains of which were not drawn, and gazed at the full October moon, which lighted up the quaint old church hard by, the humble gravestones, the quiet home scene, and shed a solemn glory over all.

"Well?" Mr. Murray asked once more.

But the man's eyes were fixed on the sky.

"Yes," he said, shuddering, "it shone like that — like that — the night of the — murder. It did indeed. It shone on his face — Gibbs's — as he lay there — it shone on his open eyes — I couldn't get them to shut; do what I would, they would stare at me. I've never seen moonlight like that since, till to-night. And I'm come to give myself up to you. I always felt I should, and it's better done and over. Better over."

"You murdered Gibbs? You?"

"I did. I've been there to-night, to look at the place. I felt I must see it again; and I saw his eyes, as plain as I see you, open, with the moonlight shining on them. Ah, a horrible sight!"

"You look very wild and ill. Perhaps ——"

"You doubt me. I wish *I* could doubt. See here."

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With a trembling emaciated hand he drew from his pocket the watch, seal ring, and purse that had belonged to Gibbs; and laid them on the table. Mr. Murray knew them.

"I used the money," said the man, faintly. "There were but a few shillings, and I was in great want."

Then he sank down on a chair with a dreadful groan.

Mr. Murray gave him a restorative, and after a time he rallied. With his hollow eyes still gazing at the moonlight, and with that ever-recurring shudder, he faltered out at intervals the following story.

He and Gibbs had been formerly associated in disreputable money transactions, which had ended in his own ruin. Being in abject distress, he had, on the promise of a considerable bribe, agreed to aid Gibbs in a plot to obtain possession of Susan's person. When she and George had separated for the fortnight previous to their contemplated marriage, the two confederates had followed her to Ormiston, and, concealing themselves in a low part of the town, had kept close watch upon her movements. Ascertaining that she was to spend the day with a cousin, they sent a woman, a creature of their own, to waylay her on her road, with a message purporting to come from George Eade, imploring her to hasten to him immediately, as he was injured by an accident on the railroad, and might have but a few hours to live. Appalled by such intelligence, the poor girl hurried to the place where the woman led her, entered without a shadow of suspicion a lonely house in the suburbs, and found herself in the presence of Gibbs and Williams, who, instantly securing the

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door, informed her that this subterfuge had been resorted to in order to get her into the power of the former. They told her that she was now in a place where screams would not be heeded, even if heard, and whence she would find it impossible to escape, and that she would not be quitted night or day by them or their female assistant, until she should consent to become the wife of Gibbs. Who added, with furious oaths, that had her union with George Eade taken place, he would have shot him down on his way from church.

Wild with terror and astonishment, helpless, bewildered, the girl resisted longer than might have been expected in one naturally weak. But finding herself incessantly watched, trembling, too, for her life (for Gibbs stood over her with a loaded pistol and the most furious threats), she was frightened at last into writing, at his dictation, the letters to her aunt and lover, announcing her marriage; though that event did not really take place till nearly three weeks later, when, worn out, and almost stupified into acquiescence, she was married in due form. Even then, Williams declared that she would have resisted still, but for her fears for her lover's safety. His life seemed to be dearer to her than her own happiness, and Gibbs had sworn so vehemently that his life should be the immediate forfeit of his union with her, that she felt that union would be impossible. She married, therefore, offering herself up as a kind of ransom for the man she loved. Then Williams claimed his reward.

But his worthless confederate was not one to fulfil honestly any promise involving the sacrifice of money. He paid the first of three instalments agreed upon; but

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constantly shirked the payment of the others, until at last, Williams finding himself in immediate danger of arrest, made his way down to the neighbourhood of Cummer, and lurking about the Southanger Woods, the deep recesses of which were well calculated for concealment, watched his opportunity, and accosted Gibbs one evening as he was driving home from Tenelms alone. That worthy, though, as usual, half drunk, recognised him at once, and swearing at him for an impudent beggar, did his best to drive his horse over him. Infuriated by such treatment, Williams wrote him a letter, declaring that if he failed to bring, on a certain night to a certain spot in Southanger Woods, every shilling of the sum he had promised to pay, he (Williams) would the very next morning go before the nearest magistrate and reveal the whole plot of Susan's abduction and marriage.

Alarmed by this threat, Gibbs answered the appointment, but without bringing the money; indeed, it soon became clear that he had no more intention of paying it than before. Williams, exasperated beyond endurance by these repeated disappointments, and rendered desperate by want, swore he would at least possess himself of whatever money or valuables the other had about him. Gibbs resisted with fury, and a fierce struggle ensued, during which he repeatedly endeavoured to stab his opponent with his clasp-knife. At length Williams prevailed, and throwing all his strength into one supreme effort, hurled Gibbs to the ground, the back of whose head striking with fearful violence against a tree, he was killed by the force of the blow. Appalled by his own act, and by the probable consequences to himself, Williams hastily dragged

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the body from the footpath, rifled the pockets, and hurried away from the scene. The church clock struck ten as he emerged from Southanger Woods; he walked all that night, rested the next day in an old outhouse, and succeeded in reaching London undiscovered. But he was, almost immediately afterwards, arrested for debt, and had remained in prison until within the last few days, when he was released chiefly because he was believed to be dying of consumption. And he *was* dying, he added, despairingly. For, since that fearful night, the victim's upturned eyes had followed him everywhere — everywhere — and his life had been a burden to him.

Such was the tale, told in broken whispers in the dead of night, to the clergyman, by that miserable man: a tale impossible to doubt, and triumphantly proving the innocence of one who had been too long suspected. Before twelve o'clock next day, the whole village was ringing with the news of Williams's confession, which spread like wildfire.

George bore his triumph, as he had borne unjust suspicion. The man's character had been strangely purified in the furnace of that affliction. The awful fate of his enemy, overtaking him with the suddenness of a chastisement from Heaven, had struck George at the time with a strange compassion, as well as self-upbraiding. For, though guiltless of Gibbs's death, he was not guiltless of many and eager longings for it; and he would have given worlds to have forgiven him, as he hoped himself to be forgiven. Hence his first sad and self-accusing words in his father's house, after hearing of the murder.

It may be mentioned, by the way, that the object

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of the letter he had received from Susan on the morning of the fatal day, had been to implore him to call upon her father that very afternoon, and induce him to take immediate steps for effecting her separation from her husband, of whom she went in fear of her life, and by whom she was watched too closely to be able to assist herself. And as her letters were liable to be opened, she entreated George to meet her in Southanger Woods that night, in order to inform her of the result of his negotiation (which was never even entered into, as the farmer happened to be from home). Finding, however, that Gibbs was bound to the Plashetts from the public-house, she had rushed out hastily to warn George of the circumstance, and so prevent a meeting between the two, which was very near taking place.

Susan fully confirmed the testimony of Williams as to the circumstances of her abduction. That wretched man survived his confession little more than a week, and died in prison, penitent.

And once more George and Susan met. At that interview he took from his bosom a little silken bag, in which was a bunch of withered hops, so dried by time, that they almost crumbled beneath his touch. And he held them up to her.

There is a cottage on Cumner Common, not far from Simon Eade's, the walls of which are covered with roses and clematis. There you may see Susan, if not as beautiful as of yore, still fair; and happy now, with her brown-eyed baby in her arms; and, if you choose your hour, you may catch George, too, coming in to dinner or to tea, stalwart, handsome, with a bright cheery look on his honest English face, that will do you good to look upon.

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VIII.

TO BE TAKEN FOR LIFE.

Sophy read through the whole of the foregoing several times over, and I sat in my seat in the Library Cart (that's the name we give it) seeing her read; and I was as pleased and as proud as a Pug-Dog with his muzzle black-leaded for an evening party and his tail extra curled by machinery. Every item of my plan was crowned with success. Our reunited life was more than all that we had looked forward to. Content and joy went with us as the wheels of the two carts went round, and the same stopped with us when the two carts stopped.

But I had left something out of my calculations. Now, what had I left out? To help you to a guess, I'll say, a figure. Come. Make a guess, and guess right. Nought? No. Nine? No. Eight? No. Seven? No. Six? No. Five? No. Four? No. Three? No. Two? No. One? No. Now I'll tell you what I'll do with you. I'll say it's another sort of figure altogether. There. Why then, says you, it's a mortal figure. No nor yet a mortal figure. By such means you get yourself penned into a corner, and you can't help guessing a *im*mortal figure. That's about it. Why didn't you say so sooner?

Yes. It was a immortal figure that I had altogether left out of my calculations. Neither man's nor woman's, but a child's. Girl's, or boy's? Boy's. "I says the sparrow, with my bow and arrow." Now you have got it.

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We were down at Lancaster, and I had done two nights' more than fair average business (though I cannot in honour recommend them as a quick audience) in the open square there, near the end of the street where Mr. Sly's King's Arms and Royal Hotel stands. Mim's travelling giant otherwise Pickleson happened at the self-same time to be a trying it on in the town. The genteel lay was adopted with him. No hint of a van. Green baize alcove leading up to Pickleson in a Auction Room. Printed poster "Free list suspended, with the exception of that proud boast of an enlightened country, a free press. Schools admitted by private arrangement. Nothing to raise a blush in the cheek of youth or shock the most fastidious." Mim swearing most horrible and terrific in a pink calico pay-place, at the slackness of the public. Serious hand-bill in the shops, importing that it was all but impossible to come to a right understanding of the history of David, without seeing Pickleson.

I went to the Auction Room in question, and I found it entirely empty of everything but echoes and mouldiness, with the single exception of Pickleson on a piece of red drugget. This suited my purpose, as I wanted a private and confidential word with him, which was: "Pickleson. Owing much happiness to you, I put you in my will for a fypunnote; but, to save trouble here's fourpunten down, which may equally suit your views, and let us so conclude the transaction." Pickleson, who up to that remark had had the dejected appearance of a long Roman rushlight that couldn't anyhow get lighted, brightened up at his top extremity and made his acknowledgments in a way which (for him) was parliamentary eloquence. He likewise did add,

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that, having ceased to draw as a Roman, Mim had made proposals for his going in as a conwerted Indian Giant worked upon by The Dairyman's Daughter. This, Pickleson, having no acquaintance with the tract named after that young woman, and not being willing to couple gag with his serious views, had declined to do, thereby leading to words and the total stoppage of the unfortunate young man's beer. All of which, during the whole of the interview, was confirmed by the ferocious growling of Mim down below in the pay-place, which shook the giant like a leaf.

But what was to the present point in the remarks of the travelling giant otherwise Pickleson, was this: "Doctor Marigold" — I give his words without a hope of conweying their feebleness — "who is the strange young man that hangs about your carts?" — "The strange young *man?*" I gives him back, thinking that he meant her, and his languid circulation had dropped a syllable. "Doctor," he returns, with a pathos calculated to draw a tear from even a manly eye, "I am weak, but not so weak yet as that I don't know my words. I repeat them, Doctor. The strange young man." It then appeared that Pickleson being forced to stretch his legs (not that they wanted it) only at times when he couldn't be seen for nothing, to wit in the dead of the night and towards daybreak, had twice seen hanging about my carts, in that same town of Lancaster where I had been only two nights, this same unknown young man.

It put me rather out of sorts. What it meant as to particulars I no more foreboded then, than you forebode now, but it put me rather out of sorts. Howsoever, I made light of it to Pickleson, and I took leave

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of Pickleson advising him to spend his legacy in getting up his stamina, and to continue to stand by his religion. Towards morning I kept a look-out for the strange young man, and what was more — I saw the strange young man. He was well dressed and well looking. He loitered very nigh my carts, watching them like as if he was taking care of them, and soon after daybreak turned and went away. I sent a hail after him, but he never started or looked round, or took the smallest notice.

We left Lancaster within an hour or two, on our way towards Carlisle. Next morning at daybreak, I looked out again for the strange young man. I did not see him. But next morning I looked out again, and there he was once more. I sent another hail after him, but as before he gave not the slightest sign of being anyways disturbed. This put a thought into my head. Acting on it, I watched him in different manners and at different times not necessary to enter into, till I found that this strange young man was deaf and dumb.

The discovery turned me over, because I knew that a part of that establishment where she had been, was allotted to young men (some of them well off), and I thought to myself "If she favours him, where am I, and where is all that I have worked and planned for?" Hoping — I must confess to the selfishness — that she might *not* favour him. I set myself to find out. At last I was by accident present at a meeting between them in the open air, looking on leaning behind a fir-tree without their knowing of it. It was a moving meeting for all the three parties concerned. I knew every syllable that passed between them, as well as

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they did. I listened with my eyes, which had come to be as quick and true with deaf and dumb conversation, as my ears with the talk of people that can speak. He was a going out to China as clerk in a merchant's house, which his father had been before him. He was in circumstances to keep a wife, and he wanted her to marry him and go along with him. She persisted, no. He asked if she didn't love him? Yes, she loved him dearly, dearly, but she could never disappoint her beloved good noble generous and I don't-know-what-all father (meaning me, the Cheap Jack in the sleeved waistcoat), and she would stay with him, Heaven bless him, though it was to break her heart! Then she cried most bitterly, and that made up my mind.

While my mind had been in an unsettled state about her favouring this young man, I had felt that unreasonable towards Pickleson, that it was well for him he had got his legacy down. For I often thought "If it hadn't been for this same weak-minded giant, I might never have come to trouble my head and wex my soul about the young man." But, once that I knew she loved him — once that I had seen her weep for him — it was a different thing. I made it right in my mind with Pickleson on the spot, and I shook myself together to do what was right by all.

She had left the young man by that time (for it took a few minutes to get me thoroughly well shook together), and the young man was leaning against another of the fir-trees — of which there was a cluster — with his face upon his arm. I touched him on the back. Looking up and seeing me, he says, in our deaf and dumb talk: "Do not be angry."

"I am not angry, good boy. I am your friend. Come with me."

I left him at the foot of the steps of the Library Cart, and I went up alone. She was drying her eyes.

"You have been crying, my dear."

"Yes, father."

"Why?"

"A head-ache."

"Not a heart-ache?"

"I said a head-ache, father."

"Doctor Marigold must prescribe for that head-ache."

She took up the book of my Prescriptions, and held it up with a forced smile; but seeing me keep still and look earnest, she softly laid it down again, and her eyes were very attentive.

"The Prescription is not there, Sophy."

"Where is it?"

"Here, my dear."

I brought her young husband in, and I put her hand in his, and my only further words to both of them were these: "Doctor Marigold's last prescription. To be taken for life." After which I bolted.

When the wedding come off, I mounted a coat (blue, and bright buttons), for the first and last time in all my days, and I give Sophy away with my own hand. There were only us three and the gentleman who had had charge of her for those two years. I give the wedding dinner of four in the Library Cart. Pigeon pie, a leg of pickled pork, a pair of fowls, and suitable garden-stuff. The best of drinks. I give them a speech, and the gentlemen give us a speech, and all our jokes told, and the whole went off like a sky-

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rocket. In the course of the entertainment I explained to Sophy that I should keep the Library Cart as my living-cart when not upon the road, and that I should keep all her books for her just as they stood, till she come back to claim them. So she went to China with her young husband, and it was a parting sorrowful and heavy, and I got the boy I had another service, and so as of old when my child and wife were gone, I went plodding along alone, with my whip over my shoulder, at the old horse's head.

Sophy wrote me many letters, and I wrote her many letters. About the end of the first year she sent me one in an unsteady hand: "Dearest father, not a week ago I had a darling little daughter, but I am so well that they let me write these words to you. Dearest and best father, I hope my child may not be deaf and dumb, but I do not yet know." When I wrote back, I hinted the question; but as Sophy never answered that question, I felt it to be a sad one, and I never repeated it. For a long time our letters were regular, but then they got irregular through Sophy's husband being moved to another station, and through my being always on the move. But we were in one another's thoughts, I was equally sure, letters or no letters.

Five years, odd months, had gone since Sophy went away. I was still the King of the Cheap Jacks, and at a greater heighth of popularity than ever. I had had a first-rate autumn of it, and on the twenty-third of December, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four, I found myself at Uxbridge, Middlesex, clean sold out. So I jogged up to London with the old horse, light and easy, to have my Christmas-Eve and Christmas-

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Day alone by the fire in the Library Cart, and then to buy a regular new stock of goods all round, to sell 'em again and get the money.

I am a neat hand at cookery, and I'll tell you what I knocked up for my Christmas-Eve dinner in the Library Cart. I knocked up a beefsteak pudding for one, with two kidneys, a dozen oysters, and a couple of mushrooms, thrown in. It's a pudding to put a man in good humour with everything, except the two bottom buttons of his waistcoat. Having relished that pudding and cleared away, I turned the lamp low, and sat down by the light of the fire, watching it as it shone upon the backs of Sophy's books.

Sophy's books so brought up Sophy's self, that I saw her touching face quite plainly, before I dropped off dozing by the fire. This may be a reason why Sophy, with her deaf and dumb child in her arms, seemed to stand silent by me all through my nap. I was on the road, off the road, in all sorts of places, North and South and West and East, Winds liked best and winds liked least, Here and there and gone astray, Over the hills and far away, and still she stood silent by me, with her silent child in her arms. Even when I woke with a start, she seemed to vanish, as if she had stood by me in that very place only a single instant before.

I had started at a real sound, and the sound was on the steps of the cart. It was the light hurried tread of a child, coming clambering up. That tread of a child had once been so familiar to me, that for half a moment I believed I was a going to see a little ghost.

But the touch of a real child was laid upon the

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outer handle of the door, and the handle turned and the door opened a little way, and a real child peeped in. A bright little comely girl with large dark eyes.

Looking full at me, the tiny creature took off her mite of a straw hat, and a quantity of dark curls fell all about her face. Then she opened her lips, and said in a pretty voice:

"Grandfather!"

"Ah my God!" I cries out. "She can speak!"

"Yes, dear grandfather. And I am to ask you whether there was ever any one that I remind you of?"

In a moment Sophy was round my neck as well as the child, and her husband was a wringing my hand with his face hid, and we all had to shake ourselves together before we could get over it. And when we did begin to get over it, and I saw the pretty child a talking, pleased and quick and eager and busy, to her mother, in the signs that I had first taught her mother, the happy and yet pitying tears fell rolling down my face.

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MUGBY JUNCTION.

Barbox Brothers		**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
Barbox Brothers and Co.		**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
Main Line.	**The Boy at Mugby**	**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
No. 1 Branch Line.	**The Signalman**	**By Mr. Charles Dickens.**
No. 2 Branch Line.	**The Engine Driver**	**By Mr. Halliday.**
No. 3 Branch Line.	**The Compensation House**	**By Mr. Charles Collins.**
No. 4 Branch Line.	**The Travelling Post-Office**	**By Miss Hesba Stretton.**
No. 5 Branch Line.	**The Engineer**	**By Miss Amelia Edwards.**

BARBOX BROTHERS.

I.

"GUARD! What place is this?"

"Mugby Junction, sir."

"A windy place!"

"Yes, it mostly is, sir."

"And looks comfortless indeed!"

"Yes, it generally does, sir."

"Is it a rainy night still?"

"Pours, sir."

"Open the door. I'll get out."

"You'll have, sir," said the guard, glistening with drops of wet, and looking at the tearful face of his watch by the light of his lantern as the traveller descended, "three minutes here."

"More, I think. — For I am not going on."

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"Thought you had a through ticket, sir?"

"So I have, but I shall sacrifice the rest of it. I want my luggage."

"Please to come to the van and point it out, sir. Be good enough to look very sharp, sir. Not a moment to spare."

The guard hurried to the luggage van, and the traveller hurried after him. The guard got into it, and the traveller looked into it.

"Those two large black portmanteaus in the corner where your light shines. Those are mine."

"Name upon 'em, sir?"

"Barbox Brothers."

"Stand clear, sir, if you please. One. Two Right!"

Lamp waved. Signal lights ahead already changing. Shriek from engine. Train gone.

"Mugby Junction!" said the traveller, pulling up the woollen muffler round his throat with both hands. "At past three o'clock of a tempestuous morning! So!"

He spoke to himself. There was no one else to speak to. Perhaps, though there had been any one else to speak to, he would have preferred to speak to himself. Speaking to himself, he spoke to a man within five years of fifty either way, who had turned grey too soon, like a neglected fire; a man of pondering habit, brooding carriage of the head, and suppressed internal voice; a man with many indications on him of having been much alone.

He stood unnoticed on the dreary platform, except by the rain and by the wind. Those two vigilant assailants made a rush at him. "Very well," said he,

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yielding. "It signifies nothing to me, to what quarter I turn my face."

Thus, at Mugby Junction, at past three o'clock of a tempestuous morning, the traveller went where the weather drove him.

Not but what he could make a stand when he was so minded, for, coming to the end of the roofed shelter (it is of considerable extent at Mugby Junction) and looking out upon the dark night, with a yet darker spirit-wing of storm beating its wild way through it, he faced about, and held his own as ruggedly in the difficult direction, as he had held it in the easier one. Thus, with a steady step, the traveller went up and down, up and down, up and down, seeking nothing, and finding it.

A place replete with shadowy shapes, this Mugby Junction in the black hours of the four-and-twenty. Mysterious goods trains, covered with palls and gliding on like vast weird funerals, conveying themselves guiltily away from the presence of the few lighted lamps, as if their freight had come to a secret and unlawful end. Half miles of coal pursuing in a Detective manner, following when they lead, stopping when they stop, backing when they back. Red hot embers showering out upon the ground, down this dark avenue, and down the other, as if torturing fires were being raked clear; concurrently, shrieks and groans and grinds invading the ear, as if the tortured were at the height of their suffering. Iron-barred cages full of cattle jangling by midway, the drooping beasts with horns entangled, eyes frozen with terror, and mouths too: at least they have long icicles (or what seem so) hanging from their lips. Unknown languages in the

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air, conspiring in red, green, and white, characters. An earthquake accompanied with thunder and lightning, going up express to London. Now, all quiet, all rusty, wind and rain in possession, lamps extinguished, Mugby Junction dead and indistinct, with its robe drawn over its head, like Cæsar.

Now, too, as the belated traveller plodded up and down, a shadowy train went by him in the gloom which was no other than the train of a life. From whatsoever intangible deep cutting or dark tunnel it emerged, here it came, unsummoned and unannounced, stealing upon him and passing away into obscurity. Here, mournfully went by, a child who had never had a childhood or known a parent, inseparable from a youth with a bitter sense of his namelessness, coupled to a man the enforced business of whose best years had been distasteful and oppressive, linked to an ungrateful friend, dragging after him a woman once beloved. Attendant, with many a clank and wrench, were lumbering cares, dark meditations, huge dim disappointments, monotonous years, a long jarring line of the discords of a solitary and unhappy existence.

"— Yours, sir?"

The traveller recalled his eyes from the waste into which they had been staring, and fell back a step or so under the abruptness, and perhaps the chance appropriateness, of the question.

"O! My thoughts were not here for the moment. Yes. Yes. Those two portmanteaus are mine. Are you a Porter?"

"On Porter's wages, sir. But I am Lamps."

The traveller looked a little confused.

"Who did you say you are?"

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"Lamps, sir," showing an oily cloth in his hand, as further explanation.

"Surely, surely. Is there any hotel or tavern here?"

"Not exactly here, sir. There is a Refreshment Room here, but ——" Lamps, with a mighty serious look, gave his head a warning roll that plainly added — "but it's a blessed circumstance for you that it's not open."

"You couldn't recommend it, I see, if it was available?"

"Ask your pardon, sir. If it was ——?"

"Open?"

"It ain't my place, as a paid servant of the company to give my opinion on any of the company's toepics," he pronounced it more like toothpicks, "beyond lamp-ile and cottons," returned Lamps, in a confidential tone; "but speaking as a man, I wouldn't recommend my father (if he was to come to life again) to go and try how he'd be treated at the Refreshment Room. Not speaking as a man, no, I would *not*."

The traveller nodded conviction. "I suppose I can put up in the town? There is a town here?" For the traveller (though a-stay-at-home compared with most travellers) had been, like many others, carried on the steam winds and the iron tides through that Junction before, without having ever, as one might say, gone ashore there.

"O yes, there's a town, sir. Anyways there's town enough to put up in. But," following the glance of the other at his luggage, "this is a very dead time of the night with us, sir. The deadest time. I might a'most call it our deadest and buriedest time."

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"No porters about?"

"Well, sir, you see," returned Lamps, confidential again, "they in general goes off with the gas. That's how it is. And they seem to have overlooked you, through your walking to the furder end of the platform. But in about twelve minutes or so, she may be up."

"Who may be up?"

"The three forty-two, sir. She goes off in a sidin' till the Up X passes, and then she," here an air of hopeful vagueness pervaded Lamps, "doos all as lays in her power."

"I doubt if I comprehend the arrangement."

"I doubt if anybody do, sir. She's a Parliamentary, sir. And, you see, a Parliamentary, or a Skirmishun ——"

"Do you mean an Excursion?"

"That's it, sir. — A Parliamentary or a Skirmishun, she mostly *doos* go off into a sidin'. But when she *can* get a chance, she's whistled out of it, and she's whistled up into doin' all as," Lamps again wore the air of a highly sanguine man who hoped for the best, "all as lays in her power."

He then explained that porters on duty being required to be in attendance on the Parliamentary matron in question, would doubtless turn up with the gas. In the mean time, if the gentleman would not very much object to the smell of lamp-oil, and would accept the warmth of his little room. —— The gentleman being by this time very cold, instantly closed with the proposal.

A greasy little cabin it was, suggestive to the sense of smell, of a cabin in a Whaler. But there was a

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bright fire burning in its rusty grate, and on the floor there stood a wooden stand of newly trimmed and lighted lamps, ready for carriage service. They made a bright show, and their light, and the warmth, accounted for the popularity of the room, as borne witness to by many impressions of velveteen trousers on a form by the fire, and many rounded smears and smudges of stooping velveteen shoulders on the adjacent wall. Various untidy shelves accommodated a quantity of lamps and oil-cans, and also a fragrant collection of what looked like the pocket-handkerchiefs of the whole lamp family.

As Barbox Brothers (so to call the traveller on the warranty of his luggage) took his seat upon the form, and warmed his now ungloved hands at the fire, he glanced aside at a little deal desk, much blotched with ink, which his elbow touched. Upon it, were some scraps of coarse paper, and a superannuated steel pen in very reduced and gritty circumstances.

From glancing at the scraps of paper, he turned involuntarily to his host, and said, with some roughness:

"Why, you are never a poet, man!"

Lamps had certainly not the conventional appearance of one, as he stood modestly rubbing his squab nose with a handkerchief so exceedingly oily, that he might have been in the act of mistaking himself for one of his charges. He was a spare man of about the Barbox Brothers time of life, with his features whimsically drawn upward as if they were attracted by the roots of his hair. He had a peculiarly shining transparent complexion, probably occasioned by constant oleaginous application; and his attractive hair, being

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cut short, and being grizzled, and standing straight up on end as if it in its turn were attracted by some invisible magnet above it, the top of his head was not very unlike a lamp-wick.

"But to be sure it's no business of mine," said Barbox Brothers. "That was an impertinent observation on my part. Be what you like."

"Some people, sir," remarked Lamps, in a tone of apology, "are sometimes what they don't like."

"Nobody knows that better than I do," sighed the other. "I have been what I don't like, all my life."

"When I first took, sir," resumed Lamps, "to composing little Comic-Songs-like ——"

Barbox Brothers eyed him with great disfavour.

"— To composing little Comic-Songs-like — and what was more hard — to singing 'em afterwards," said Lamps, "it went against the grain at that time, it did indeed."

Something that was not all oil here shining in Lamps's eye, Barbox Brothers withdrew his own a little disconcerted, looked at the fire, and put a foot on the top bar. "Why did you do it, then?" he asked, after a short pause; abruptly enough but in a softer tone. "If you didn't want to do it, why did you do it? Where did you sing them? Public-house?"

To which Mr. Lamps returned the curious reply: "Bedside."

At this moment, while the traveller looked at him for elucidation, Mugby Junction started suddenly, trembled violently, and opened its gas eyes. "She's got up!" Lamps announced, excited. "What lay in

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her power is sometimes more, and sometimes less; but it's laid in her power to get up to-night, by George!"

The legend "Barbox Brothers" in large white letters on two black surfaces, was very soon afterwards trundling on a truck through a silent street, and, when the owner of the legend had shivered on the pavement half an hour, what time the porter's knocks at the Inn Door knocked up the whole town first, and the Inn last, he groped his way into the close air of a shut-up house, and so groped between the sheets of a shut-up bed that seemed to have been expressly refrigerated for him when last made.

II.

"You remember me, Young Jackson?"

"What do I remember if not you? You are my first remembrance. It was you who told me that was my name. It was you who told me that on every twentieth of December my life had a penitential anniversary in it called a birthday. I suppose the last communication was truer than the first!"

"What am I like, Young Jackson?"

"You are like a blight all through the year, to me. You hard-lined, thin-lipped, repressive, changeless woman with a wax mask on. You are like the Devil to me; most of all when you teach me religious things, for you make me abhor them."

"You remember me, Mr. Young Jackson?" In another voice from another quarter.

"Most gratefully, sir. You were the ray of hope and prospering ambition in my life. When I attended your course, I believed that I should come to be a

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great healer, and I felt almost happy — even though I was still the one boarder in the house with that horrible mask, and ate and drank in silence and constraint with the mask before me, every day. As I had done every, every, every, day, through my school-time and from my earliest recollection."

"What am I like, Mr. Young Jackson?"

"You are like a Superior Being to me. You are like Nature beginning to reveal herself to me. I hear you again, as one of the hushed crowd of young men kindling under the power of your presence and knowledge, and you bring into my eyes the only exultant tears that ever stood in them."

"You remember Me, Mr. Young Jackson?" In a grating voice from quite another quarter.

"Too well. You made your ghostly appearance in my life one day, and announced that its course was to be suddenly and wholly changed. You showed me which was my wearisome seat in the Galley of Barbox Brothers. (When *they* were, if they ever were, is unknown to me; there was nothing of them but the name when I bent to the oar.) You told me what I was to do, and what to be paid; you told me afterwards, at intervals of years, when I was to sign for the Firm, when I became a partner, when I became the Firm. I know no more of it, or of myself."

"What am I like, Mr. Young Jackson?"

"You are like my father, I sometimes think. You are hard enough and cold enough so to have brought up an unacknowledged son. I see your scanty figure, your close brown suit, and your tight brown wig; but you, too, wear a wax mask to your death. You never

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by a chance remove it — it never by a chance falls off — and I know no more of you."

Throughout this dialogue, the traveller spoke to himself at his window in the morning, as he had spoken to himself at the Junction overnight. And as he had then looked in the darkness, a man who had turned grey too soon, like a neglected fire: so he now looked in the sunlight, an ashier grey, like a fire which the brightness of the sun put out.

The firm of Barbox Brothers had been some off-shoot or irregular branch of the Public Notary and bill-broking tree. It had gained for itself a griping reputation before the days of Young Jackson, and the reputation had stuck to it and to him. As he had imperceptibly come into possession of the dim den up in the corner of a court off Lombard-street, on whose grimy windows the inscription Barbox Brothers had for many long years daily interposed itself between him and the sky, so he had insensibly found himself a personage held in chronic distrust, whom it was essential to screw tight to every transaction in which he engaged, whose word was never to be taken without his attested bond, whom all dealers with openly set up guards and wards against. This character had come upon him through no act of his own. It was as if the original Barbox had stretched himself down upon the office-floor, and had thither caused to be conveyed Young Jackson in his sleep, and had there effected a metempsychosis and exchange of persons with him. The discovery — aided in its turn by the deceit of the only woman he had ever loved, and the deceit of the only friend he had ever made: who eloped from him to be married together — the discovery, so followed

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up, completed what his earliest rearing had begun. He shrank, abashed, within the form of Barbox, and lifted up his head and heart no more.

But he did at last effect one great release in his condition. He broke the oar he had plied so long, and he scuttled and sank the galley. He prevented the gradual retirement of an old conventional business from him, by taking the initiative and retiring from it. With enough to live on (though after all with not too much), he obliterated the firm of Barbox Brothers from the pages of the Post-office Directory and the face of the earth, leaving nothing of it but its name on two portmanteaus.

"For one must have some name in going about, for people to pick up," he explained to Mugby High-street, through the Inn-window, "and that name at least was real once. Whereas, Young Jackson! — Not to mention its being a sadly satirical misnomer for Old Jackson."

He took up his hat and walked out, just in time to see, passing along on the opposite side of the way, a velveteen man, carrying his day's dinner in a small bundle that might have been larger without suspicion of gluttony, and pelting away towards the Junction at a great pace.

"There's Lamps!" said Barbox Brothers. "And by-the-by ——"

Ridiculous, surely, that a man so serious, so self-contained, and not yet three days emancipated from a routine of drudgery, should stand rubbing his chin in the street, in a brown study about Comic Songs.

"Bedside?" said Barbox Brothers, testily. "Sings them at the bedside? Why at the bedside, unless he

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goes to bed drunk? Does, I shouldn't wonder. But it's no business of mine. Let me see. Mugby Junction, Mugby Junction. Where shall I go next? As it came into my head last night when I woke from an uneasy sleep in the carriage and found myself here, I can go anywhere from here. Where shall I go? I'll go and look at the Junction by daylight. There's no hurry, and I may like the look of one Line better than another."

But there were so many Lines. Gazing down upon them from a bridge at the Junction, it was as if the concentrating Companies formed a great Industrial Exhibition of the works of extraordinary ground-spiders that spun iron. And then so many of the Lines went such wonderful ways, so crossing and curving among one another, that the eye lost them. And then some of them appeared to start with the fixed intention of going five hundred miles, and all of a sudden gave it up at an insignificant barrier, or turned off into a workshop. And then others, like intoxicated men, went a little way very straight, and surprisingly slued round and came back again. And then others were so chockfull of trucks of coal, others were so blocked with trucks of casks, others were so gorged with trucks of ballast, others were so set apart for wheeled objects like immense iron cotton-reels: while others were so bright and clear, and others were so delivered over to rust and ashes and idle wheelbarrows out of work, with their legs in the air (looking much like their masters on strike), that there was no beginning, middle, or end, to the bewilderment.

Barbox Brothers stood puzzled on the bridge, passing his right hand across the lines on his forehead,

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which multiplied while he looked down, as if the railway Lines were getting themselves photographed on that sensitive plate. Then, was heard a distant ringing of bells and blowing of whistles. Then, puppet-looking heads of men popped out of boxes in perspective, and popped in again. Then, prodigious wooden razors set up on end, began shaving the atmosphere. Then, several locomotive engines in several directions began to scream and be agitated. Then, along one avenue a train came in. Then, along another two trains appeared that didn't come in, but stopped without. Then, bits of trains broke off. Then, a struggling horse became involved with them. Then, the locomotives shared the bits of trains, and ran away with the whole.

"I have not made my next move much clearer by this. No hurry. No need to make up my mind to-day, or to-morrow, nor yet the day after. I'll take a walk."

It fell out somehow (perhaps he meant it should) that the walk tended to the platform at which he had alighted, and to Lamps's room. But Lamps was not in his room. A pair of velveteen shoulders were adapting themselves to one of the impressions on the wall by Lamps's fireplace, but otherwise the room was void. In passing back to get out of the station again, he learnt the cause of this vacancy, by catching sight of Lamps on the opposite line of railway, skipping along the top of a train, from carriage to carriage, and catching lighted namesakes thrown up to him by a coadjutor.

"He is busy. He has not much time for composing or singing Comic Songs this morning, I take it."

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The direction he pursued now, was into the country, keeping very near to the side of one great Line of railway, and within easy view of others. "I have half a mind," he said, glancing around, "to settle the question from this point, by saying, 'I'll take this set of rails, or that, or t'other, and stick to it.' They separate themselves from the confusion, out here, and go their ways."

Ascending a gentle hill of some extent, he came to a few cottages. There, looking about him as a very reserved man might who had never looked about him in his life before, he saw some six or eight young children come merrily trooping and whooping from one of the cottages, and disperse. But not until they had all turned at the little garden gate, and kissed their hands to a face at the upper window: a low window enough, although the upper, for the cottage had but a story of one room above the ground.

Now, that the children should do this was nothing; but that they should do this to a face lying on the sill of the open window, turned towards them in a horizontal position, and apparently only a face, was something noticeable. He looked up at the window again. Could only see a very fragile though a very bright face, lying on one cheek on the window-sill. The delicate smiling face of a girl or woman. Framed in long bright brown hair, round which was tied a light blue band or fillet, passing under the chin.

He walked on, turned back, passed the window again, shyly glanced up again. No change. He struck off by a winding branch-road at the top of the hill — which he must otherwise have descended — kept the cottages in view, worked his way round at a

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distance so as to come out once more into the main road and be obliged to pass the cottages again. The face still lay on the window-sill, but not so much inclined towards him. And now there were a pair of delicate hands too. They had the action of performing on some musical instrument, and yet it produced no sound that reached his ears.

"Mugby Junction must be the maddest place in England," said Barbox Brothers, pursuing his way down the hill. "The first thing I find here is a Railway Porter who composes comic songs to sing at his bedside. The second thing I find here is a face, and a pair of hands playing a musical instrument that *don't* play!"

The day was a fine bright day in the early beginning of November, the air was clear and inspiriting, and the landscape was rich in beautiful colours. The prevailing colours in the court off Lombard-street, London city, had been few and sombre. Sometimes, when the weather elsewhere was very bright indeed, the dwellers in those tents enjoyed a pepper-and-salt-coloured day or two, but their atmosphere's usual wear was slate, or snuff colour.

He relished his walk so well, that he repeated it next day. He was a little earlier at the cottage than on the day before, and he could hear the children upstairs singing to a regular measure and clapping out the time with their hands.

"Still, there is no sound of any musical instrument," he said, listening at the corner, "and yet I saw the performing hands again, as I came by. What are the children singing? Why, good Lord, they can never be singing the multiplication-table!"

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They were though, and with infinite enjoyment. The mysterious face had a voice attached to it which occasionally led or set the children right. Its musical cheerfulness was delightful. The measure at length stopped, and was succeeded by a murmuring of young voices, and then by a short song which he made out to be about the current month of the year, and about what work it yielded to the labourers in the fields and farm-yards. Then, there was a stir of little feet, and the children came trooping and whooping out, as on the previous day. And again, as on the previous day, they all turned at the garden gate, and kissed their hands — evidently to the face on the window-sill, though Barbox Brothers from his retired post of disadvantage at the corner could not see it.

But as the children dispersed, he cut off one small straggler — a brown-faced boy with flaxen hair — and said to him:

"Come here, little one. Tell me whose house is that?"

The child, with one swarthy arm held up across his eyes, half in shyness, and half ready for defence, said from behind the inside of his elbow:

"Phœbe's."

"And who," said Barbox Brothers, quite as much embarrassed by his part in the dialogue as the child could possibly be by his, "is Phœbe?"

To which the child made answer: "Why, Phœbe, of course."

The small but sharp observer had eyed his questioner closely, and had taken his moral measure. He lowered his guard, and rather assumed a tone with

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him: as having discovered him to be an unaccustomed person in the art of polite conversation.

"Phœbe," said the child, "can't be anybobby else but Phœbe. Can she?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Well," returned the child, "then why did you ask me?"

Deeming it prudent to shift his ground, Barbox Brothers took up a new position.

"What do you do there? Up there in that room where the open window is. What do you do there?"

"Cool," said the child.

"Eh?"

"C-o-ol," the child repeated in a louder voice, lengthening out the word with a fixed look and great emphasis, as much as to say: "What's the use of your having grown up, if you're such a donkey as not to understand me?"

"Ah! School, school," said Barbox Brothers. "Yes, yes, yes. And Phœbe teaches you?"

The child nodded.

"Good boy."

"Tound it out, have you?" said the child.

"Yes, I have found it out. What would you do with twopence, if I gave it you?"

"Pend it."

The knock-down promptitude of this reply leaving him not a leg to stand upon, Barbox Brothers produced the twopence with great lameness, and withdrew in a state of humiliation.

But, seeing the face on the window-sill as he passed the cottage, he acknowledged its presence there with a gesture, which was not a nod, not a bow, not a

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removal of his hat from his head, but was a diffident compromise between or struggle with all three. The eyes in the face seemed amused, or cheered, or both, and the lips modestly said: "Good day to you, sir."

"I find I must stick for a time to Mugby Junction," said Barbox Brothers, with much gravity, after once more stopping on his return road to look at the Lines where they went their several ways so quietly. "I can't make up my mind yet, which iron road to take. In fact, I must get a little accustomed to the Junction before I can decide."

So, he announced at the Inn that he was "going to stay on, for the present," and improved his acquaintance with the Junction that night, and again next morning, and again next night and morning: going down to the station, mingling with the people there, looking about him down all the avenues of railway, and beginning to take an interest in the incomings and outgoings of the trains. At first, he often put his head into Lamps's little room, but he never found Lamps there. A pair or two of velveteen shoulders he usually found there, stooping over the fire, sometimes in connexion with a clasped knife and a piece of bread and meat; but the answer to his inquiry, "Where's Lamps?" was, either that he was "t'other side the line," or, that it was his off-time, or (in the latter case), his own personal introduction to another Lamps who was not his Lamps. However, he was not so desperately set upon seeing Lamps now but he bore the disappointment. Nor did he so wholly devote himself to his severe application to the study of Mugby Junction, as to neglect exercise. On the contrary, he took a walk every day, and always the

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same walk. But the weather turned cold and wet again, and the window was never open.

III.

At length, after a lapse of some days, there came another streak of fine bright hardy autumn weather. It was a Saturday. The window was open, and the children were gone. Not surprising, this, for he had patiently watched and waited at the corner, until they *were* gone.

"Good day," he said to the face; absolutely getting his hat clear off his head this time.

"Good day to you, sir."

"I am glad you have a fine sky again, to look at."

"Thank you, sir. It is kind of you."

"You are an invalid, I fear?"

"No, sir. I have very good health."

"But are you not always lying down?"

"O yes, I am always lying down, because I cannot sit up. But I am not an invalid."

The laughing eyes seemed highly to enjoy his great mistake.

"Would you mind taking the trouble to come in, sir? There is a beautiful view from this window. And you would see that I am not at all ill — being so good as to care."

It was said to help him, as he stood irresolute, but evidently desiring to enter, with his diffident hand on the latch of the garden gate. It did help him, and he went in.

The room up-stairs was a very clean white room with a low roof. Its only inmate lay on a couch that

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brought her face to a level with the window. The couch was white too; and her simple dress or wrapper being light blue, like the band around her hair, she had an ethereal look, and a fanciful appearance of lying among clouds. He felt that she instinctively perceived him to be by habit a downcast taciturn man; it was another help to him to have established that understanding so easily, and got it over.

There was an awkward constraint upon him, nevertheless, as he touched her hand, and took a chair at the side of her couch.

"I see now," he began, not at all fluently, "how you occupy your hands. Only seeing you from the path outside, I thought you were playing upon something."

She was engaged in very nimbly and dexterously making lace. A lace-pillow lay upon her breast; and the quick movements and changes of her hands upon it as she worked, had given them the action he had misinterpreted.

"That is curious," she answered, with a bright smile. "For I often fancy, myself, that I play tunes while I am at work."

"Have you any musical knowledge?"

She shook her head.

"I think I could pick out tunes, if I had any instrument, which could be made as handy to me as my lace-pillow. But I dare say I deceive myself. At all events, I shall never know."

"You have a musical voice. Excuse me; I have heard you sing."

"With the children?" she answered, slightly colour-

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ing. "O yes. I sing with the dear children, if it can be called singing."

Barbox Brothers glanced at the two small forms in the room, and hazarded the speculation that she was fond of children, and that she was learned in new systems of teaching them? "Very fond of them," she said, shaking her head again; "but I know nothing of teaching, beyond the interest I have in it, and the pleasure it gives me when they learn. Perhaps your overhearing my little scholars sing some of their lessons, has led you so far astray as to think me a grand teacher? Ah! I thought so! No, I have only read and been told about that system. It seemed so pretty and pleasant, and to treat them so like the merry Robins they are, that I took up with it in my little way. You don't need to be told what a very little way mine is, sir," she added, with a glance at the small forms and round the room.

All this time her hands were busy at her lace-pillow. As they still continued so, and as there was a kind of substitute for conversation in the click and play of its pegs, Barbox Brothers took the opportunity of observing her. He guessed her to be thirty. The charm of her transparent face and large bright brown eyes, was, not that they were passively resigned, but that they were actively and thoroughly cheerful. Even her busy hands, which of their own thinness alone might have besought compassion, plied their task with a gay courage that made mere compassion an unjustifiable assumption of superiority, and an impertinence.

He saw her eyes in the act of rising towards his, and he directed his towards the prospect, saying: "Beautiful indeed!"

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"Most beautiful, sir. I have sometimes had a fancy that I would like to sit up, for once, only to try how it looks to an erect head. But what a foolish fancy that would be to encourage! It cannot look more lovely to any one than it does to me."

Her eyes were turned to it as she spoke, with most delighted admiration and enjoyment. There was not a trace in it of any sense of deprivation.

"And those threads of railway, with their puffs of smoke and steam changing places so fast, make it so lively for me," she went on. "I think of the number of people who *can* go where they wish, on their business, or their pleasure; I remember that the puffs make signs to me that they are actually going while I look; and that enlivens the prospect with abundance of company, if I want company. There is the great Junction, too. I don't see it under the foot of the hill, but I can very often hear it, and I always know it is there. It seems to join me, in a way, to I don't know how many places and things that *I* shall never see."

With an abashed kind of idea that it might have already joined himself to something he had never seen, he said constrainedly: "Just so."

"And so you see, sir," pursued Phœbe, "I am not the invalid you thought me, and I am very well off indeed."

"You have a happy disposition," said Barbox Brothers: perhaps with a slight excusatory touch for his own disposition.

"Ah! But you should know my father," she replied. "His is the happy disposition! — Don't mind, sir!" For his reserve took the alarm at a step upon the stairs, and he distrusted that he would be set down

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for a troublesome intruder. "This is my father coming."

The door opened, and the father paused there.

"Why, Lamps!" exclaimed Barbox Brothers, starting from his chair. "How do you do, Lamps?"

To which, Lamps responded: "The gentleman for Nowhere! How do you DO, sir?"

And they shook hands, to the greatest admiration and surprise of Lamps's daughter.

"I have looked you up half a dozen times since that night," said Barbox Brothers, "but have never found you."

"So I've heerd on, sir, so I've heerd on," returned Lamps. "It's your being noticed so often down at the Junction, without taking any train, that has begun to get you the name among us of the gentleman for Nowhere. No offence in my having called you by it when took by surprise, I hope, sir?"

"None at all. It's as good a name for me as any other you could call me by. But may I ask you a question in the corner here?"

Lamps suffered himself to be led aside from his daughter's couch, by one of the buttons of his velveteen jacket.

"Is this the bedside where you sing your songs?"

Lamps nodded.

The gentleman for Nowhere clapped him on the shoulder, and they faced about again.

"Upon my word, my dear," said Lamps then to his daughter, looking from her to her visitor, "it is such an amaze to me, to find you brought acquainted with this gentleman, that I must (if this gentleman will excuse me) take a rounder."

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Mr. Lamps demonstrated in action what this meant, by pulling out his oily handkerchief rolled up in the form of a ball, and giving himself an elaborate smear, from behind the right ear, up the cheek, across the forehead, and down the other cheek to behind his left ear. After this operation, he shone exceedingly.

"It's according to my custom when particular warmed up by any agitation, sir," he offered by way of apology. "And really, I am throwed into that state of amaze by finding you brought acquainted with Phœbe, that I — that I think I will, if you'll excuse me, take another rounder." Which he did, seeming to be greatly restored by it.

They were now both standing by the side of her couch, and she was working at her lace-pillow. "Your daughter tells me," said Barbox Brothers, still in a half reluctant shamefaced way, "that she never sits up."

"No, sir, nor never has done. You see, her mother (who died when she was a year and two months old) was subject to very bad fits, and as she had never mentioned to me that she *was* subject to fits, they couldn't be guarded against. Consequently, she dropped the baby when took, and this happened."

"It was very wrong of her," said Barbox Brothers, with a knitted brow, "to marry you, making a secret of her infirmity."

"Well, sir," pleaded Lamps, in behalf of the long-deceased. "You see, Phœbe and me, we have talked that over too. And Lord bless us! Such a number on us has our infirmities, what with fits, and what with misfits, of one sort and another, that if we confessed to 'em all before we got married, most of us might never get married."

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"Might not that be for the better?"

"Not in this case, sir," said Phœbe, giving her hand to her father.

"No, not in this case, sir," said her father, patting it between his own.

"You correct me," returned Barbox Brothers, with a blush, "and I must look so like a Brute, that at all events it would be superfluous in me to confess to *that* infirmity. I wish you would tell me a little more about yourselves. I hardly know how to ask it of you, for I am conscious that I have a bad stiff manner, a dull discouraging way with me, but I wish you would."

"With all our hearts, sir," returned Lamps, gaily, for both. "And first of all, that you may know my name ——"

"Stay!" interposed the visitor, with a slight flush. "What signifies your name! Lamps is name enough for me. I like it. It is bright and expressive. What do I want more!"

"Why to be sure, sir," returned Lamps. "I have in general no other name down at the Junction; but I thought, on account of your being here as a first-class single, in a private character, that you might —"

The visitor waved the thought away with his hand, and Lamps acknowledged the mark of confidence by taking another rounder.

"You are hard-worked, I take for granted?" said Barbox Brothers, when the subject of the rounder came out of it much dirtier than he went into it.

Lamps was beginning, "Not particular so" — when his daughter took him up.

"O yes, sir, he is very hard-worked. Fourteen,

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fifteen, eighteen, hours a day. Sometimes twenty-four hours at a time."

"And you," said Barbox Brothers, "what with your school, Phœbe, and what with your lace-making ——"

"But my school is a pleasure to me," she interrupted, opening her brown eyes wider, as if surprised to find him so obtuse. "I began it when I was but a child, because it brought me and other children into company, don't you see? *That* was not work. I carry it on still, because it keeps children about me. *That* is not work. I do it as love, not as work. Then my lace-pillow;" her busy hands had stopped, as if her argument required all her cheerful earnestness, but now went on again at the name; "it goes with my thoughts when I think, and it goes with my tunes when I hum any, and *that's* not work. Why, you yourself thought it was music, you know, sir. And so it is, to me."

"Everything is!" cried Lamps, radiantly. "Everything is music to her, sir."

"My father is, at any rate," said Phœbe, exultingly pointing her thin forefinger at him. "There is more music in my father than there is in a brass band."

"I say! My dear! It's very fillyillially done, you know; but you are flattering your father," he protested sparkling.

"No I am not, sir, I assure you. No I am not. If you could hear my father sing, you would know I am not. But you never will hear him sing, because he never sings to any one but me. However tired he is, he always sings to me when he comes home. When I lay here long ago, quite a poor little broken doll, he used to sing to me. More than that, he used to make songs, bringing in whatever little jokes we had between

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us. More than that, he often does so to this day. O! I'll tell of you, father, as the gentleman has asked about you. He is a poet, sir."

"I shouldn't wish the gentleman, my dear," observed Lamps, for the moment turning grave, "to carry away that opinion of your father, because it might look as if I was given to asking the stars in a mollon-colly manner what they was up to. Which I wouldn't at once waste the time, and take the liberty, my dear."

"My father," resumed Phœbe, amending her text, "is always on the bright side, and the good side. You told me just now, I had a happy disposition. How can I help it?"

"Well; but my dear," returned Lamps argumentatively, "how can *I* help it? Put it to yourself, sir. Look at her. Always as you see her now. Always working — and after all, sir, for but a very few shillings a week — always contented, always lively, always interested in others, of all sorts. I said, this moment, she was always as you see her now. So she is, with a difference that comes to much the same. For, when it's my Sunday off and the morning bells have done ringing, I hear the prayers and thanks read in the touchingest way, and I have the hymns sung to me — so soft, sir, that you couldn't hear 'em out of this room — in notes that seem to me, I am sure, to come from Heaven and go back to it."

It might have been merely through the association of these words with their sacredly quiet time, or it might have been through the larger association of the words with the Redeemer's presence beside the bedridden; but here her dexterous fingers came to a stop on

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the lace-pillow, and clasped themselves around his neck as he bent down. There was great natural sensibility in both father and daughter, the visitor could easily see; but each made it, for the other's sake, retiring, not demonstrative; and perfect cheerfulness, intuitive or acquired, was either the first or second nature of both. In a very few moments, Lamps was taking another rounder with his comical features beaming, while Phœbe's laughing eyes (just a glistening speck or so upon their lashes) were again directed by turns to him, and to her work, and to Barbox Brothers.

"When my father, sir," she said brightly, "tells you about my being interested in other people even though they know nothing about me — which, by-the-by, I told you myself — you ought to know how that comes about. That's my father's doing."

"No, it isn't!" he protested.

"Don't you believe him, sir; yes, it is. He tells me of everything he sees down at his work. You would be surprised what a quantity he gets together for me every day. He looks into the carriages, and tells me how the ladies are drest — so that I know all the fashions! He looks into the carriages, and tells me what pairs of lovers he sees, and what new-married couples on their wedding trip — so that I know all about that! He collects chance newspapers and books — so that I have plenty to read! He tells me about the sick people who are travelling to try to get better — so that I know all about them! In short, as I began by saying, he tells me everything he sees and makes out, down at his work, and you can't think what a quantity he does see and make out."

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"As to collecting newspapers and books, my dear," said Lamps, "it's clear I can have no merit in that, because they're not my perquisites. You see, sir, it's this way: A Guard, he'll say to me, 'Hallo, here you are, Lamps. I've saved this paper for your daughter. How is she agoing on?' A Head-Porter, he'll say to me, 'Here! Catch hold, Lamps. Here's a couple of wollumes for your daughter. Is she pretty much where she were?' And that's what makes it double welcome, you see. If she had a thousand pound in a box, they wouldn't trouble themselves about her; but being what she is — that is, you understand," Lamps added, somewhat hurriedly, "not having a thousand pound in a box — they take thought for her. And as concerning the young pairs, married and unmarried, it's only natural I should bring home what little I can about *them*, seeing that there's not a Couple of either sort in the neighbourhood that don't come of their own accord to confide in Phœbe."

She raised her eyes triumphantly to Barbox Brothers, as she said:

"Indeed, sir, that is true. If I could have got up and gone to church, I don't know how often I should have been a bridesmaid. But if I could have done that, some girls in love might have been jealous of me, and as it is, no girl is jealous of me. And my pillow would not have been half as ready to put the piece of cake under, as I always find it," she added, turning her face on it with a light sigh, and a smile at her father.

The arrival of a little girl, the biggest of the scholars, now led to an understanding on the part of Barbox Brothers, that she was the domestic of the cottage, and had come to take active measures in it, at-

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tended by a pail that might have extinguished her, and a broom three times her height. He therefore rose to take his leave, and took it; saying that if Phœbe had no objection, he would come again.

He had muttered that he would come "in the course of his walks." The course of his walks must have been highly favourable to his return, for he returned after an interval of a single day.

"You thought you would never see me any more, I suppose?" he said to Phœbe as he touched her hand, and sat down by her couch.

"Why should I think so!" was her surprised rejoinder.

"I took it for granted you would mistrust me."

"For granted, sir? Have you been so much mistrusted?"

"I think I am justified in answering yes. But I may have mistrusted too, on my part. No matter just now. We were speaking of the Junction last time. I have passed hours there since the day before yesterday."

"Are you now the gentleman for Somewhere?" she asked with a smile.

"Certainly for Somewhere; but I don't yet know Where. You would never guess what I am travelling from. Shall I tell you? I am travelling from my birthday."

Her hands stopped in her work, and she looked at him with incredulous astonishment.

"Yes," said Barbox Brothers, not quite easy in his chair, "from my birthday. I am, to myself, an unintelligible book with the earlier chapters all torn out, and thrown away. My childhood had no grace of

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childhood, my youth had no charm of youth, and what can be expected from such a lost beginning?" His eyes meeting hers as they were addressed intently to him, something seemed to stir within his breast, whispering: "Was this bed a place for the graces of childhood and the charms of youth to take to, kindly? O shame, shame!"

"It is a disease with me," said Barbox Brothers, checking himself, and making as though he had a difficulty in swallowing something, "to go wrong about that. I don't know how I came to speak of that. I hope it is because of an old misplaced confidence in one of your sex involving an old bitter treachery. I don't know. I am all wrong together."

Her hands quietly and slowly resumed their work. Glancing at her, he saw that her eyes were thoughtfully following them.

"I am travelling from my birthday," he resumed, "because it has always been a dreary day to me. My first free birthday coming round some five or six weeks hence, I am travelling to put its predecessors far behind me, and to try to crush the day — or, at all events, put it out of my sight — by heaping new objects on it."

As he paused, she looked at him; but only shook her head as being quite at a loss.

"This is unintelligible to your happy disposition," he pursued, abiding by his former phrase as if there were some lingering virtue of self-defence in it: "I knew it would be, and am glad it is. However, on this travel of mine (in which I mean to pass the rest of my days, having abandoned all thought of a fixed home), I stopped, as you heard from your father, at

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the Junction here. The extent of its ramifications quite confused me as to whither I should go, *from* here. I have not yet settled, being still perplexed among so many roads. What do you think I mean to do? How many of the branching roads can you see from your window?"

Looking out, full of interest, she answered, "Seven."

"Seven," said Barbox Brothers, watching her with a grave smile. "Well! I propose to myself, at once to reduce the gross number to those very seven, and gradually to fine them down to one — the most promising for me — and to take that."

"But how will you know, sir, which *is* the most promising?" she asked, with her brightened eyes roving over the view.

"Ah!" said Barbox Brothers, with another grave smile, and considerably improving in his ease of speech. "To be sure. In this way. Where your father can pick up so much every day for a good purpose, I may once and again pick up a little for an indifferent purpose. The gentleman for Nowhere must become still better known at the Junction. He shall continue to explore it, until he attaches something that he has seen, heard, or found out, at the head of each of the seven roads, to the road itself. And so his choice of a road shall be determined by his choice among his discoveries."

Her hands still busy, she again glanced at the prospect, as if it comprehended something that had not been in it before, and laughed as if it yielded her new pleasure.

"But I must not forget," said Barbox Brothers,

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"(having got so far) to ask a favour. I want your help in this expedient of mine. I want to bring you what I pick up at the heads of the seven roads that you lie here looking out at, and to compare notes with you about it. May I? They say two heads are better than one. I should say myself that probably depends upon the heads concerned. But I am quite sure, though we are so newly acquainted, that your head and your father's have found out better things, Phœbe, than ever mine of itself discovered."

She gave him her sympathetic right hand, in perfect rapture with his proposal, and eagerly and gratefully thanked him.

"That's well!" said Barbox Brothers. "Again I must not forget (having got so far) to ask a favour. Will you shut your eyes?"

Laughing playfully at the strange nature of the request, she did so.

"Keep them shut," said Barbox Brothers, going softly to the door, and coming back. "You are on your honour, mind, not to open your eyes until I tell you that you may?"

"Yes! On my honour."

"Good. May I take your lace-pillow from you for a minute?"

Still laughing and wondering, she removed her hands from it, and he put it aside.

"Tell me. Did you see the puffs of smoke and steam made by the morning fast-train yesterday on road number seven from here?"

"Behind the elm-trees and the spire?"

"That's the road," said Barbox Brothers, directing his eyes towards it.

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"Yes. I watched them melt away."

"Anything unusual in what they expressed?"

"No!" she answered, merrily.

"Not complimentary to me, for I was in that train. I went — don't open your eyes — to fetch you this, from the great ingenious town. It is not half so large as your lace-pillow, and lies easily and lightly in its place. These little keys are like the keys of a miniature piano, and you supply the air required with your left hand. May you pick out delightful music from it, my dear! For the present — you can open your eyes now — good-bye!"

In his embarrassed way, he closed the door upon himself, and only saw, in doing so, that she ecstatically took the present to her bosom and caressed it. The glimpse gladdened his heart, and yet saddened it; for so might she, if her youth had flourished in its natural course, have taken to her breast that day the slumbering music of her own child's voice.

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With good will and earnest purpose, the gentleman for Nowhere began, on the very next day, his researches at the heads of the seven roads. The results of his researches, as he and Phœbe afterwards set them down in fair writing, hold their due places in this veracious chronicle. But they occupied a much longer time in the getting together than they ever will in the perusal. And this is probably the case with most reading matter, except when it is of that highly beneficial kind (for Posterity)

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which is "thrown off in a few moments of leisure" by the superior poetic geniuses who scorn to take prose pains.

It must be admitted, however, that Barbox by no means hurried himself. His heart being in his work of good-nature, he revelled in it. There was the joy, too (it was a true joy to him), of sometimes sitting by, listening to Phœbe as she picked out more and more discourse from her musical instrument, and as her natural taste and ear refined daily upon her first discoveries. Besides being a pleasure, this was an occupation, and in the course of weeks it consumed hours. It resulted that his dreaded birthday was close upon him before he had troubled himself any more about it.

The matter was made more pressing by the unforeseen circumstance that the councils held (at which Mr. Lamps, beaming most brilliantly, on a few rare occasions assisted) respecting the road to be selected, were, after all, in no wise assisted by his investigations. For, he had connected this interest with this road, or that interest with the other, but could deduce no reason from it for giving any road the preference. Consequently, when the last council was holden, that part of the business stood, in the end, exactly where it had stood in the beginning.

"But, sir," remarked Phœbe, "we have only six roads after all. Is the seventh road dumb?"

"The seventh road? O!" said Barbox Brothers, rubbing his chin. "That is the road I took, you know, when I went to get your little present. That is *its* story, Phœbe."

"Would you mind taking that road again, sir?" she asked with hesitation.

"Not in the least; it is a great high road after all."

"I should like you to take it," returned Phœbe, with a persuasive smile, "for the love of that little present which must ever be so dear to me. I should like you to take it, because that road can never be again, like any other road to me. I should like you to take it, in remembrance of your having done me so much good: of your having made me so much happier! If you leave me by the road you travelled when you went to do me this great kindness," sounding a faint chord as she spoke, "I shall feel, lying here watching at my window, as if it must conduct you to a prosperous end, and bring you back some day."

"It shall be done, my dear; it shall be done."

So at last the gentleman for Nowhere took a ticket for Somewhere, and his destination was the great ingenious town.

He had loitered so long about the Junction that it was the eighteenth of December when he left it. "High time," he reflected, as he seated himself in the train, "that I started in earnest! Only one clear day remains between me and the day I am running away from. I'll push onward for the hill-country to-morrow. I'll go to Wales."

It was with some pains that he placed before himself the undeniable advantages to be gained in the way of novel occupation for his senses from misty mountains, swollen streams, rain, cold, a wild seashore, and rugged roads. And yet he scarcely made them out as distinctly as he could have wished. Whether the poor girl, in spite of her new resource, her music, would have any feeling of loneliness upon her now — just at first —

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that she had not had before; whether she saw those very puffs of steam and smoke that he saw, as he sat in the train thinking of her; whether her face would have any pensive shadow on it as they died out of the distant view from her window; whether, in telling him he had done her so much good, she had not unconsciously corrected his old moody bemoaning of his station in life, by setting him thinking that a man might be a great healer, if he would, and yet not be a great doctor; these and other similar meditations got between him and his Welsh picture. There was within him, too, that dull sense of vacuity which follows separation from an object of interest, and cessation of a pleasant pursuit; and this sense, being quite new to him, made him restless. Further, in losing Mugby Junction he had found himself again; and he was not the more enamoured of himself for having lately passed his time in better company.

But surely, here not far ahead, must be the great ingenious town. This crashing and clashing that the train was undergoing, and this coupling on to it of a multitude of new echoes, could mean nothing less than approach to the great station. It did mean nothing less. After some stormy flashes of town lightning, in the way of swift revelations of red-brick blocks of houses, high red-brick chimney-shafts, vistas of red-brick railway arches, tongues of fire, blots of smoke, valleys of canal, and hills of coal, there came the thundering in at the journey's end.

Having seen his portmanteaus safely housed in the hotel he chose, and having appointed his dinner-hour, Barbox Brothers went out for a walk in the busy streets. And now it began to be suspected by him that

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Mugby Junction was a Junction of many branches, invisible as well as visible, and had joined him to an endless number of byways. For, whereas he would, but a little while ago, have walked these streets blindly brooding, he now had eyes and thoughts for a new external world. How the many toiling people lived, and loved, and died; how wonderful it was to consider the various trainings of eye and hand, the nice distinctions of sight and touch, that separated them into classes of workers, and even into classes of workers at subdivisions of oné complete whole which combined their many intelligences and forces, though of itself but some cheap object of use or ornament in common life; how good it was to know that such assembling in a multitude on their part, and such contribution of their several dexterities towards a civilising end, did not deteriorate them as it was the fashion of the supercilious Mayflies of humanity to pretend, but engendered among them a self-respect and yet a modest desire to be much wiser than they were (the first evinced in their well-balanced bearing and manner of speech when he stopped to ask a question; the second, in the announcements of their popular studies and amusements on the public walls); these considerations, and a host of such, made his walk a memorable one. "I too am but a little part of a great whole," he began to think; "and to be serviceable to myself and others, or to be happy, I must cast my interest into, and draw it out of, the common stock."

Although he had arrived at his journey's end for the day by noon, he had since insensibly walked about the town so far and so long that the lamplighters were now at their work in the streets, and the shops were

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sparkling up brilliantly. Thus reminded to turn towards his quarters, he was in the act of doing so, when a very little hand crept into his, and a very little voice said:

"O! If you please, I am lost!"

He looked down, and saw a very little fair-haired girl.

"Yes," she said, confirming her words with a serious nod. "I am indeed. I am lost."

Greatly perplexed, he stopped, looked about him for help, descried none, and said, bending low: "Where do you live, my child?"

"I don't know where I live," she returned. "I am lost."

"What is your name?"

"Polly."

"What is your other name?"

The reply was prompt, but unintelligible.

Imitating the sound, as he caught it, he hazarded the guess, "Trivits?"

"O no!" said the child, shaking her head. "Nothing like that."

"Say it again, little one."

An unpromising business. For this time it had quite a different sound.

He made the venture: "Paddens?"

"O no!" said the child. "Nothing like that."

"Once more. Let us try it again, dear."

A most hopeless business. This time it swelled into four syllables. "It can't be Tappitarver?" said Barbox Brothers, rubbing his head with his hat in discomfiture.

"No! It ain't," the child quietly assented.

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On her trying this unfortunate name once more, with extraordinary efforts at distinctness, it swelled into eight syllables at least.

"Ah! I think," said Barbox Brothers, with a desperate air of resignation, "that we had better give it up."

"But I am lost," said the child, nestling her little hand more closely in his, "and you'll take care of me, won't you?"

If ever a man were disconcerted by division between compassion on the one hand, and the very imbecility of irresolution on the other, here the man was. "Lost!" he repeated, looking down at the child. "I am sure *I* am. What is to be done!"

"Where do *you* live?" asked the child, looking up at him, wistfully.

"Over there," he answered, pointing vaguely in the direction of his hotel.

"Hadn't we better go there?" said the child.

"Really," he replied, "I don't know but what we had."

So they set off, hand in hand. He, through comparison of himself against his little companion, with a clumsy feeling on him as if he had just developed into a foolish giant. She, clearly elevated in her own tiny opinion by having got him so neatly out of his embarrassment.

"We are going to have dinner when we get there, I suppose?" said Polly.

"Well," he rejoined, "I — yes, I suppose we are."

"Do you like your dinner?" asked the child.

"Why, on the whole," said Barbox Brothers, "yes, I think I do."

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"I do mine," said Polly. "Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"No. Have you?"

"Mine are dead."

"O!" said Barbox Brothers. With that absurd sense of unwieldiness of mind and body weighing him down, he would have not known how to pursue the conversation beyond this curt rejoinder, but that the child was always ready for him.

"What," she asked, turning her soft hand coaxingly in his, "are you going to do to amuse me, after dinner?"

"Upon my soul, Polly," exclaimed Barbox Brothers, very much at a loss, "I have not the slightest idea!"

"Then I tell you what," said Polly. "Have you got any cards at your house?"

"Plenty," said Barbox Brothers, in a boastful vein.

"Very well. Then I'll build houses, and you shall look at me. You mustn't blow, you know."

"O no!" said Barbox Brothers. "No, no, no. No blowing. Blowing's not fair."

He flattered himself that he had said this pretty well for an idiotic monster; but the child, instantly perceiving the awkwardness of his attempt to adapt himself to her level, utterly destroyed his hopeful opinion of himself by saying, compassionately: "What a funny man you are!"

Feeling, after this melancholy failure, as if he every minute grew bigger and heavier in person, and weaker in mind, Barbox gave himself up for a bad job. No giant ever submitted more meekly to be led in triumph by all-conquering Jack, than he to be bound in slavery to Polly.

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"Do you know any stories?" she asked him.

He was reduced to the humiliating confession: "No.".

"What a dunce you must be, mustn't you?" said Polly.

He was reduced to the humiliating confession: "Yes."

"Would you like me to teach you a story? But you must remember it, you know, and be able to tell it right to somebody else afterwards?"

He professed that it would afford him the highest mental gratification to be taught a story, and that he would humbly endeavour to retain it in his mind. Whereupon Polly, giving her hand a new little turn in his, expressive of settling down for enjoyment, commenced a long romance, of which every relishing clause began with the words: "So this" or "And so this." As, "So this boy;" or, "So this fairy;" or, "And so this pie was four yards round, and two yards and a quarter deep." The interest of the romance was derived from the intervention of this fairy to punish this boy for having a greedy appetite. To achieve which purpose, this fairy made this pie, and this boy ate and ate and ate, and his cheeks swelled and swelled and swelled. There were many tributary circumstances, but the forcible interest culminated in the total consumption of this pie, and the bursting of this boy. Truly he was a fine sight, Barbox Brothers, with serious attentive face, and ear bent down, much jostled on the pavements of the busy town, but afraid of losing a single incident of the epic, lest he should be examined in it by-and-by and found deficient.

Thus they arrived at the hotel. And there he had

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to say at the bar, and said awkwardly enough: "I have found a little girl!"

The whole establishment turned out to look at the little girl. Nobody knew her; nobody could make out her name, as she set it forth — except one chambermaid, who said it was Constantinople — which it wasn't.

"I will dine with my young friend in a private room," said Barbox Brothers to the hotel authorities, "and perhaps you will be so good as let the police know that the pretty baby is here. I suppose she is sure to be inquired for, soon, if she has not been already. Come along, Polly."

Perfectly at ease and peace, Polly came along, but, finding the stairs rather stiff work, was carried up by Barbox Brothers. The dinner was a most transcendent success, and the Barbox sheepishness, under Polly's directions how to mince her meat for her, and how to diffuse gravy over the plate with a liberal and equal hand, was another fine sight.

"And now," said Polly, "while we are at dinner, you be good, and tell me that story I taught you."

With the tremors of a civil service examination on him, and very uncertain indeed, not only as to the epoch at which the pie appeared in history, but also as to the measurements of that indispensable fact, Barbox Brothers made a shaky beginning, but under encouragement did very fairly. There was a want of breadth observable in his rendering of the cheeks, as well as the appetite, of the boy; and there was a certain tameness in his fairy, referable to an under-current of desire to account for her. Still, as the first lumbering

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performance of a good-humoured monster, it passed muster.

"I told you to be good," said Polly, "and you are good, ain't you?"

"I hope so," replied Barbox Brothers.

Such was his deference that Polly, elevated on a platform of sofa-cushions in a chair at his right hand, encouraged him with a pat or two on the face from the greasy bowl of her spoon, and even with a gracious kiss. In getting on her feet upon her chair, however, to give him this last reward, she toppled forward among the dishes, and caused him to exclaim as he effected her rescue: "Gracious Angels! Whew! I thought we were in the fire, Polly!"

"What a coward you are, ain't you?" said Polly, when replaced.

"Yes, I am rather nervous," he replied. "Whew! Don't, Polly! Don't flourish your spoon, or you'll go over sideways. Don't tilt up your legs when you laugh, Polly, or you'll go over backwards. Whew! Polly, Polly, Polly," said Barbox Brothers, nearly succumbing to despair, "we are environed with dangers!"

Indeed, he could descry no security from the pit-falls that were yawning for Polly, but in proposing to her, after dinner, to sit upon a low stool. "I will, if you will," said Polly. So, as peace of mind should go before all, he begged the waiter to wheel aside the table, bring a pack of cards, a couple of footstools, and a screen, and close in Polly and himself before the fire, as it were in a snug room within the room. Then, finest sight of all, was Barbox Brothers on his footstool, with a pint decanter on the rug, contemplating Polly as she built successfully, and growing blue in the face

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with holding his breath, lest he should blow the house down.

"How you stare, don't you?" said Polly, in a houseless pause.

Detected in the ignoble fact, he felt obliged to admit, apologetically: "I am afraid I was looking rather hard at you, Polly."

"Why do you stare?" asked Polly.

"I cannot," he murmured to himself, "recal why. — I don't know, Polly."

"You must be a simpleton to do things and not know why, mustn't you?" said Polly.

In spite of which reproof, he looked at the child again, intently, as she bent her head over her card-structure, her rich curls shading her face. "It is impossible," he thought, "that I can ever have seen this pretty baby before. Can I have dreamed of her? In some sorrowful dream?"

He could make nothing of it. So he went into the building trade as a journeyman under Polly, and they built three stories high, four stories high: even five.

"I say. Who do you think is coming?" asked Polly, rubbing her eyes after tea.

He guessed: "The waiter?"

"No," said Polly, "the dustman. I am getting sleepy."

A new embarrassment for Barbox Brothers!

"I don't think I am going to be fetched to-night," said Polly; "what do you think?"

He thought not, either. After another quarter of an hour, the dustman not merely impending but actually arriving, recourse was had to the Constantinopolitan

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chambermaid: who cheerily undertook that the child should sleep in a comfortable and wholesome room, which she herself would share.

"And I know you will be careful, won't you," said Barbox Brothers, as a new fear dawned upon him, "that she don't fall out of bed."

Polly found this so highly entertaining that she was under the necessity of clutching him round the neck with both arms as he sat on his footstool picking up the cards, and rocking him to and fro, with her dimpled chin on his shoulder.

"O what a coward you are, ain't you!" said Polly. "Do *you* fall out of bed?"

"N — not generally, Polly."

"No more do I."

With that, Polly gave him a reassuring hug or two to keep him going, and then giving that confiding mite of a hand of hers to be swallowed up in the hand of the Constantinopolitan chambermaid, trotted off, chattering, without a vestige of anxiety.

He looked after her, had the screen removed and the table and chairs replaced, and still looked after her. He paced the room for half an hour. "A most engaging little creature, but it's not that. A most winning little voice, but it's not that. That has much to do with it, but there is something more. How can it be that I seem to know this child? What was it she imperfectly recalled to me when I felt her touch in the street, and, looking down at her, saw her looking up at me?"

"Mr. Jackson!"

With a start he turned towards the sound of the subdued voice, and saw his answer standing at the door.

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"O Mr. Jackson, do not be severe with me. Speak a word of encouragement to me, I beseech you."

"You are Polly's mother."

"Yes."

Yes. Polly herself might come to this, one day. As you see what the rose was, in its faded leaves; as you see what the summer growth of the woods was, in their wintry branches; so Polly might be traced, one day, in a care-worn woman like this, with her hair turned grey. Before him, were the ashes of a dead fire that had once burned bright. This was the woman he had loved. This was the woman he had lost. Such had been the constancy of his imagination to her, so had Time spared her under its withholding, that now, seeing how roughly the inexorable hand had struck her, his soul was filled with pity and amazement.

He led her to a chair, and stood leaning on a corner of the chimney-piece, with his head resting on his hand, and his face half averted.

"Did you see me in the street, and show me to your child?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Is the little creature, then, a party to deceit?"

"I hope there is no deceit. I said to her, 'We have lost our way, and I must try to find mine by myself. Go to that gentleman and tell him you are lost. You shall be fetched by-and-by.' Perhaps you have not thought how very young she is?"

"She is very self-reliant."

"Perhaps because she is so young?"

He asked, after a short pause, "Why did you do this?"

"O Mr. Jackson, do you ask me? In the hope

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that you might see something in my innocent child to soften your heart towards me. Not only towards me, but towards my husband."

He suddenly turned about, and walked to the opposite end of the room. He came back again with a slower step, and resumed his former attitude, saying:

"I thought you had emigrated to America?"

"We did. But life went ill with us there, and we came back."

"Do you live in this town?"

"Yes. I am a daily teacher of music here. My husband is a book-keeper."

"Are you — forgive my asking — poor?"

"We earn enough for our wants. That is not our distress. My husband is very, very ill of a lingering disorder. He will never recover ——"

"You check yourself. If it is for want of the encouraging word you spoke of, take it from me. I cannot forget the old time, Beatrice."

"God bless you!" she replied, with a burst of tears, and gave him her trembling hand.

"Compose yourself. I cannot be composed if you are not, for to see you weep distresses me beyond expression. Speak freely to me. Trust me."

She shaded her face with her veil, and after a little while spoke calmly. Her voice had the ring of Polly's.

"It is not that my husband's mind is at all impaired by his bodily suffering, for I assure you that is not the case. But in his weakness, and in his knowledge that he is incurably ill, he cannot overcome the ascendancy of one idea. It preys upon him, embitters every moment of his painful life, and will shorten it."

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She stopping, he said again: "Speak freely to me. Trust me."

"We have had five children before this darling, and they all lie in their little graves. He believes that they have withered away under a curse, and that it will blight this child like the rest."

"Under what curse?"

"Both I and he have it on our conscience that we tried you very heavily, and I do not know but that, if I were as ill as he, I might suffer in my mind as he does. This is the constant burden: — 'I believe, Beatrice, I was the only friend that Mr. Jackson ever cared to make, though I was so much his junior. The more influence he acquired in the business, the higher he advanced me, and I was alone in his private confidence. I came between him and you, and I took you from him. We were both secret, and the blow fell when he was wholly unprepared. The anguish it caused a man so compressed, must have been terrible; the wrath it awakened, inappeasable. So, a curse came to be invoked on our poor pretty little flowers, and they fall.'"

"And you, Beatrice," he asked, when she had ceased to speak, and there had been a silence afterwards: "how say you?"

"Until within these few weeks I was afraid of you, and I believed that you would never, never, forgive."

"Until within these few weeks," he repeated. "Have you changed your opinion of me within these few weeks?"

"Yes."

"For what reason?"

"I was getting some pieces of music in a shop in

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this town, when, to my terror, you came in. As I veiled my face and stood in the dark end of the shop, I heard you explain that you wanted a musical instrument for a bedridden girl. Your voice and manner were so softened, you showed such interest in its selection, you took it away yourself with so much tenderness of care and pleasure, that I knew you were a man with a most gentle heart. O Mr. Jackson, Mr. Jackson, if you could have felt the refreshing rain of tears that followed for me!"

Was Phœbe playing at that moment, on her distant couch? He seemed to hear her.

"I inquired in the shop where you lived, but could get no information. As I had heard you say that you were going back by the next train (but you did not say where), I resolved to visit the station at about that time of day, as often as I could, between my lessons, on the chance of seeing you again. I have been there very often, but saw you no more until to-day. You were meditating as you walked the street, but the calm expression of your face emboldened me to send my child to you. And when I saw you bend your head to speak tenderly to her, I prayed to God to forgive me for having ever brought a sorrow on it. I now pray to you to forgive me, and to forgive my husband. I was very young, he was young too, and in the ignorant hardihood of such a time of life we don't know what we do to those who have undergone more discipline. You generous man! You good man! So to raise me up and make nothing of my crime against you!" — for he would not see her on her knees, and soothed her as a kind father might have soothed an erring daughter — "thank you, bless you, thank you!"

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When he next spoke, it was after having drawn aside the window-curtain and looked out a while. Then, he only said:

"Is Polly asleep?"

"Yes. As I came in, I met her going away upstairs, and put her to bed myself."

"Leave her with me for to-morrow, Beatrice, and write me your address on this leaf of my pocket-book. In the evening I will bring her home to you — and to her father."

* * * * *

"Hallo!" cried Polly, putting her saucy sunny face in at the door next morning when breakfast was ready: "I thought I was fetched last night?"

"So you were, Polly, but I asked leave to keep you here for the day, and to take you home in the evening."

"Upon my word!" said Polly. "You are very cool, ain't you?"

However, Polly seemed to think it a good idea, and added, "I suppose I must give you a kiss though you *are* cool." The kiss given and taken, they sat down to breakfast in a highly conversational tone.

"Of course, you are going to amuse me?" said Polly.

"Oh, of course," said Barbox Brothers.

In the pleasurable height of her anticipations, Polly found it indispensable to put down her piece of toast, cross one of her little fat knees over the other, and bring her little fat right hand down into her left hand with a business-like slap. After this gathering of herself together, Polly, by that time, a mere heap of dim-

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ples, asked in a wheedling manner: "What are we going to do, you dear old thing?"

"Why, I was thinking," said Barbox Brothers, "— but are you fond of horses, Polly?"

"Ponies, I am," said Polly, "especially when their tails are long. But horses — n — no — too big, you know."

"Well," pursued Barbox Brothers, in a spirit of grave mysterious confidence adapted to the importance of the consultation, "I did see yesterday, Polly, on the walls, pictures of two long-tailed ponies, speckled all over —"

"No, no, NO!" cried Polly, in an ecstatic desire to linger on the charming details. "Not speckled all over!"

"Speckled all over. Which ponies jump through hoops —"

"No, no, NO!" cried Polly, as before. "They never jump through hoops!"

"Yes, they do. O I assure you they do. And eat pie in pinafores —"

"Ponies eating pie in pinafores!" said Polly. "What a story-teller you are, ain't you?"

"Upon my honour. — And fire off guns."

(Polly hardly seemed to see the force of the ponies resorting to fire-arms.)

"And I was thinking," pursued the exemplary Barbox, "that if you and I were to go to the Circus where these ponies are, it would do our constitutions good."

"Does that mean, amuse us?" inquired Polly. "What long words you do use, don't you?"

Apologetic for having wandered out of his depth,

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he replied: "That means amuse us. That is exactly what it means. There are many other wonders besides the ponies, and we shall see them all. Ladies and gentlemen in spangled dresses, and elephants and lions and tigers."

Polly became observant of the teapot, with a curled-up nose indicating some uneasiness of mind. "They never get out, of course," she remarked as a mere truism.

"The elephants and lions and tigers? O dear no!"

"O dear no!" said Polly. "And of course nobody's afraid of the ponies shooting anybody."

"Not the least in the world."

"No, no, not the least in the world," said Polly.

"I was also thinking," proceeded Barbox, "that if we were to look in at the toy-shop, to choose a doll —"

"Not dressed!" cried Polly, with a clap of her hands. "No, no, NO, not dressed!"

"Full dressed. Together with a house, and all things necessary for housekeeping —"

Polly gave a little scream, and seemed in danger of falling into a swoon of bliss. "What a darling you are!" she languidly exclaimed, leaning back in her chair. "Come and be hugged, or I must come and hug you."

This resplendent programme was carried into execution with the utmost rigour of the law. It being essential to make the purchase of the doll its first feature — or that lady would have lost the ponies — the toy-shop expedition took precedence. Polly in the magic warehouse, with a doll as large as herself under

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each arm, and a neat assortment of some twenty more on view upon the counter, did indeed present a spectacle of indecision not quite compatible with unalloyed happiness, but the light cloud passed. The lovely specimen oftenest chosen, oftenest rejected, and finally abided by, was of Circassian descent, possessing as much boldness of beauty as was reconcilable with extreme feebleness of mouth, and combining a sky-blue silk pelisse with rose-coloured satin trousers, and a black velvet hat: which this fair stranger to our northern shores would seem to have founded on the portraits of the late Duchess of Kent. The name this distinguished foreigner brought with her from beneath the glowing skies of a sunny clime was (on Polly's authority) Miss Melluka, and the costly nature of her outfit as a housekeeper, from the Barbox coffers, may be inferred from the two facts that her silver teaspoons were as large as her kitchen poker, and that the proportions of her watch exceeded those of her frying-pan. Miss Melluka was graciously pleased to express her entire approbation of the Circus, and so was Polly; for the ponies *were* speckled, and brought down nobody when they fired, and the savagery of the wild beasts appeared to be mere smoke — which article, in fact, they did produce in large quantities from their insides. The Barbox absorption in the general subject throughout the realisation of these delights was again a sight to see, nor was it less worthy to behold at dinner, when he drank to Miss Melluka, tied stiff in a chair opposite to Polly (the fair Circassian possessing an unbendable spine), and even induced the waiter to assist in carrying out with due decorum the prevailing glorious idea. To wind up, there came the agreeable fever of getting

Miss Melluka and all her wardrobe and rich possessions into a fly with Polly, to be taken home. But by that time Polly had become unable to look upon such accumulated joys with waking eyes, and had withdrawn her consciousness into the wonderful Paradise of a child's sleep. "Sleep, Polly, sleep," said Barbox Brothers, as her head dropped on his shoulder; "you shall not fall out of this bed, easily, at any rate!"

What rustling piece of paper he took from his pocket, and carefully folded into the bosom of Polly's frock, shall not be mentioned. He said nothing about it, and nothing shall be said about it. They drove to a modest suburb of the great ingenious town, and stopped at the fore-court of a small house. "Do not wake the child," said Barbox Brothers, softly, to the driver, "I will carry her in as she is."

Greeting the light at the opened door which was held by Polly's mother, Polly's bearer passed on with mother and child into a ground-floor room. There, stretched on a sofa, lay a sick man, sorely wasted, who covered his eyes with his emaciated hands.

"Tresham," said Barbox, in a kindly voice, "I have brought you back your Polly, fast asleep. Give me your hand, and tell me you are better."

The sick man reached forth his right hand, and bowed his head over the hand into which it was taken, and kissed it. "Thank you, thank you! I may say that I am well and happy."

"That's brave," said Barbox. "Tresham, I have a fancy — can you make room for me beside you here?"

He sat down on the sofa as he said the words,

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cherishing the plump peachy cheek that lay uppermost on his shoulder.

"I have a fancy, Tresham (I am getting quite an old fellow now, you know, and old fellows may take fancies into their heads sometimes), to give up Polly, having found her, to no one but you. Will you take her from me?"

As the father held out his arms for the child, each of the two men looked steadily at the other.

"She is very dear to you, Tresham?"

"Unutterably dear."

"God bless her! It is not much, Polly," he continued, turning his eyes upon her peaceful face as he apostrophised her, "it is not much, Polly, for a blind and sinful man to invoke a blessing on something so far better than himself as a little child is; but it would be much — much upon his cruel head, and much upon his guilty soul — if he could be so wicked as to invoke a curse. He had better have a millstone round his neck, and be cast into the deepest sea. Live and thrive, my pretty baby!" Here he kissed her. "Live and prosper, and become in time the mother of other little children, like the Angels who behold The Father's face!"

He kissed her again, gave her up gently to both her parents, and went out.

But he went not to Wales. No, he never went to Wales. He went straightway for another stroll about the town, and he looked in upon the people at their work, and at their play, here, there, everywhere, and where not. For he was Barbox Brothers and Co. now, and had taken thousands of partners into the solitary firm.

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He had at length got back to his hotel room, and was standing before his fire refreshing himself with a glass of hot drink which he had stood upon the chimney-piece, when he heard the town clocks striking, and, referring to his watch, found the evening to have so slipped away, that they were striking twelve. As he put up his watch again, his eyes met those of his reflection in the chimney-glass.

"Why it's your birthday already," he said, smiling. "You are looking very well. I wish you many happy returns of the day."

He had never before bestowed that wish upon himself. "By Jupiter!" he discovered, "it alters the whole case of running away from one's birthday! It's a thing to explain to Phœbe. Besides, here is quite a long story to tell her, that has sprung out of the road with no story. I'll go back, instead of going on. I'll go back by my friend Lamps's Up X presently."

He went back to Mugby Junction, and in point of fact he established himself at Mugby Junction. It was the convenient place to live in, for brightening Phœbe's life. It was the convenient place to live in, for having her taught music by Beatrice. It was the convenient place to live in, for occasionally borrowing Polly. It was the convenient place to live in, for being joined at will to all sorts of agreeable places and persons. So, he became settled there, and, his house standing in an elevated situation, it is noteworthy of him in conclusion, as Polly herself might (not irreverently) have put it:

There was an Old Barbox who lived on a hill,
And if he ain't gone, he lives there still.

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HERE FOLLOWS THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT WAS SEEN, HEARD, OR OTHERWISE PICKED UP, BY THE GENTLEMAN FOR NOWHERE, IN HIS CAREFUL STUDY OF THE JUNCTION.

MAIN LINE.

THE BOY AT MUGBY.

I am The Boy at Mugby. That's about what *I* am.

You don't know what I mean? What a pity! But I think you do. I think you must. Look here. I am the Boy at what is called The Refreshment Room at Mugby Junction, and what's proudest boast is, that it never yet refreshed a mortal being.

Up in a corner of the Down Refreshment Room at Mugby Junction, in the height of twenty-sevĕn cross draughts (I've often counted 'em while they brush the First Class hair twenty-seven ways), behind the bottles, among the glasses, bounded on the nor'-west by the beer, stood pretty far to the right of a metallic object that's at times the tea-urn and at times the soup-tureen, according to the nature of the last twang imparted to its contents which are the same groundwork, fended off from the traveller by a barrier of stale sponge-cakes erected atop of the counter, and lastly exposed sideways to the glare of Our Missis's eye — you ask a Boy so sitiwated, next time you stop in a hurry at Mugby, for anything to drink; you take particular notice that he'll try to seem not to hear you, that he'll appear in a absent manner to survey the Line through

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a transparent medium composed of your head and body, and that he won't serve you as long as you can possibly bear it. That's Me.

What a lark it is! We are the Model Establishment, we are, at Mugby. Other Refreshment Rooms send their imperfect young ladies up to be finished off by our Missis. For some of the young ladies, when they're new to the business, come into it mild! Ah! Our Missis, she soon takes that out of 'em. Why, I originally come into the business meek myself. But Our Missis she soon took that out of *me*.

What a delightful lark it is! I look upon us Refreshmenters as ockipying the only proudly independent footing on the Line. There's Papers for instance — my honourable friend if he will allow me to call him so — him as belongs to Smith's bookstall. Why he no more dares to be up to our Refreshmenting games, than he dares to jump atop of a locomotive with her steam at full pressure, and cut away upon her alone, driving himself, at limited-mail speed. Papers, he'd get his head punched at every compartment, first second and third, the whole length of a train, if he was to ventur to imitate my demeanour. It's the same with the porters, the same with the guards, the same with the ticket clerks, the same the whole way up to the secretary, traffic manager, or very chairman. There ain't a one among 'em on the nobly independent footing we are. Did you ever catch one of *them*, when you wanted anything of him, making a system of surveying the Line through a transparent medium composed of your head and body? I should hope not.

You should see our Bandolining Room at Mugby

Junction. It's led to, by the door behind the counter which you'll notice usually stands ajar, and it's the room where Our Missis and our young ladies Bandolines their hair. You should see 'em at it, betwixt trains, Bandolining away, as if they was anointing themselves for the combat. When you're telegraphed, you should see their noses all a going up with scorn, as if it was a part of the working of the same Cooke and Wheatstone electrical machinery. You should hear Our Missis give the word "Here comes the Beast to be Fed!" and then you should see 'em indignantly skipping across the Line, from the Up to the Down, or Wicer Warsaw, and begin to pitch the stale pastry into the plates, and chuck the sawdust sangwiches under the glass covers, and get out the — ha ha ha! — the Sherry — O my eye, my eye! — for your Refreshment.

It's only in the Isle of the Brave and Land of the Free (by which of course I mean to say Britannia) that Refreshmenting is so effective, so 'olesome, so constitutional, a check upon the public. There was a foreigner, which having politely, with his hat off, beseeched our young ladies and Our Missis for "a leetel gloss hoff prarndee," and having had the Line surveyed through him by all and no other acknowledgment, was a proceeding at last to help himself, as seems to be the custom in his own country, when Our Missis with her hair almost a coming un-Bandolined with rage, and her eyes omitting sparks, flew at him, cotched the decanter out of his hand, and said: "Put it down! I won't allow that!" The foreigner turned pale, stepped back with his arms stretched out in front of him, his hands clasped, and his shoulders riz, and

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exclaimed: "Ah! Is it possible this! That these disdaineous females and this ferocious old woman are placed here by the administration, not only to empoison the voyagers, but to affront them! Great Heaven! How arrives it? The English people. Or is he then a slave? Or idiot?" Another time, a merry wideawake American gent had tried the sawdust and spit it out, and had tried the Sherry and spit that out, and had tried in vain to sustain exhausted natur upon Butter-Scotch, and had been rather extra Bandolined and Line-surveyed through, when, as the bell was ringing and he paid Our Missis, he says, very loud and good-tempered: "I tell Yew what 'tis, ma'arm. I la'af. Theer! I la'af. I Dew. I oughter ha' seen most things, for I hail from the Onlimited side of the Atlantic Ocean, and I haive travelled right slick over the Limited, head on through Jee-rusalemm and the East, and likeways France and Italy, Europe Old World, and am now upon the track to the Chief European Village; but such an Institution as Yew, and Yewer young ladies, and Yewer fixin's solid and liquid, afore the glorious Tarnal I never did see yet! And if I hain't found the eighth wonder of monarchical Creation, in finding Yew, and Yewer young ladies, and Yewer fixin's solid and liquid, all as aforesaid, established in a country where the people air not absolute Loo-naticks, I am Extra Double Darned with a Nip and Frizzle to the innermostest grit! Wheerfur — Theer! — I la'af! I Dew, ma'arm. I la'af!" And so he went, stamping and shaking his sides, along the platform all the way to his own compartment.

I think it was her standing up agin the Foreigner, as giv' Our Missis the idea of going over to France,

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and droring a comparison betwixt Refreshmenting as followed among the frog-eaters, and Refreshmenting as triumphant in the Isle of the Brave and Land of the Free (by which of course I mean to say agin, Britannia). Our young ladies, Miss Whiff, Miss Piff, and Mrs. Sniff, was unanimous opposed to her going; for, as they says to Our Missis one and all, it is well beknown to the hends of the herth as no other nation except Britain has a idea of anythink, but above all of business. Why then should you tire yourself to prove what is aready proved? Our Missis however (being a teazer at all pints) stood out grim obstinate, and got a return pass by South-Eastern Tidal, to go right through, if such should be her dispositions, to Marseilles.

Sniff is husband to Mrs. Sniff, and is a regular insignificant cove. He looks arter the sawdust department in a back room, and is sometimes when we are very hard put to it let in behind the counter with a corkscrew; but never when it can be helped, his demeanour towards the public being disgusting servile. How Mrs. Sniff ever come so far to lower herself as to marry him, I don't know; but I suppose *he* does, and I should think he wished he didn't, for he leads a awful life. Mrs. Sniff couldn't be much harder with him if he was public. Similarly, Miss Whiff and Miss Piff, taking the tone of Mrs. Sniff, they shoulder Sniff about when he *is* let in with a corkscrew, and they whisk things out of his hands when in his servility he is a going to let the public have 'em, and they snap him up when in the crawling baseness of his spirit he is a going to answer a public question, and they drore more tears into his eyes than ever the mustard does which he

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all day long lays on to the sawdust. (But it ain't strong.) Once, when Sniff had the repulsiveness to reach across to get the milk-pot to hand over for a baby, I see Our Missis in her rage catch him by both his shoulders and spin him out into the Bandolining Room.

But Mrs. Sniff. How different! She's the one! She's the one as you'll notice to be always looking another way from you, when you look at her. She's the one with the small waist buckled in tight in front, and with the lace cuffs at her wrists, which she puts on the edge of the counter before her, and stands a smoothing while the public foams. This smoothing the cuffs and looking another way while the public foams, is the last accomplishment taught to the young ladies as come to Mugby to be finished by Our Missis; and it's always taught by Mrs. Sniff.

When Our Missis went away upon her journey, Mrs. Sniff was left in charge. She did hold the public in check most beautiful! In all my time, I never see half so many cups of tea given without milk to people as wanted it with, nor half so many cups of tea with milk given to people as wanted it without. When foaming ensued, Mrs. Sniff would say: "Then you'd better settle it among yourselves, and change with one another." It was a most highly delicious lark. I enjoyed the Refreshmenting business more than ever, and was so glad I had took to it when young.

Our Missis returned. It got circulated among the young ladies, and it as it might be penetrated to me through the crevices of the Bandolining Room, that she had Orrors to reveal, if revelations so contemptible could be dignified with the name. Agitation become

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awakened. Excitement was up in the stirrups. Expectation stood a tiptoe. At length it was put forth that on our slackest evening in the week, and at our slackest time of that evening betwixt trains, Our Missis would give her views of foreign Refreshmenting, in the Bandolining Room.

It was arranged tasteful for the purpose. The Bandolining table and glass was hid in a corner, a arm-chair was elevated on a packing-case for Our Missis's ockypation, a table and a tumbler of water (no sherry in it, thankee) was placed beside it. Two of the pupils, the season being autumn, and hollyhocks and daliahs being in, ornamented the wall with three devices in those flowers. On one might be read, "MAY ALBION NEVER LEARN;" on another, "KEEP THE PUBLIC DOWN;" on another, "OUR REFRESHMENTING CHARTER." The whole had a beautiful appearance, with which the beauty of the sentiments corresponded.

On Our Missis's brow was wrote Severity, as she ascended the fatal platform. (Not that that was anythink new.) Miss Whiff and Miss Piff sat at her feet. Three chairs from the Waiting Room might have been perceived by a average eye, in front of her, on which the pupils was accommodated. Behind them, a very close observer might have discerned a Boy. Myself.

"Where," said Our Missis, glancing gloomily around, "is Sniff?"

"I thought it better," answered Mrs. Sniff, "that he should not be let to come in. He is such an Ass."

"No doubt," assented Our Missis. "But for that reason is it not desirable to improve his mind?"

"O! Nothing will ever improve *him*," said Mrs. Sniff.

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"However," pursued Our Missis, "call him in, Ezekiel."

I called him in. The appearance of the low-minded cove was hailed with disapprobation from all sides, on account of his having brought his corkscrew with him. He pleaded "the force of habit."

"The force!" said Mrs. Sniff. "Don't let us have you talking about force, for Gracious sake. There! Do stand still where you are, with your back against the wall."

He is a smiling piece of vacancy, and he smiled in the mean way in which he will even smile at the public if he gets a chance (language can say no meaner of him), and he stood upright near the door with the back of his head agin the wall, as if he was a waiting for somebody to come and measure his heighth for the Army.

"I should not enter, ladies," says Our Missis, "on the revolting disclosures I am about to make, if it was not in the hope that they will cause you to be yet more implacable in the exercise of the power you wield in a constitutional country, and yet more devoted to the constitutional motto which I see before me;" it was behind her, but the words sounded better so; "'May Albion never learn!'"

Here the pupils as had made the motto, admired it, and cried, "Hear! Hear! Hear!" Sniff, showing an inclination to join in chorus, got himself frowned down by every brow.

"The baseness of the French," pursued Our Missis, "as displayed in the fawning nature of their Refreshmenting, equals, if not surpasses, anythink as was ever heard of the baseness of the celebrated Buonaparte."

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Miss Whiff, Miss Piff and me, we drored a heavy breath, equal to saying, "We thought as much!" Miss Whiff and Miss Piff seeming to object to my droring mine along with theirs, I drored another, to aggravate 'em.

"Shall I be believed," says Our Missis, with flashing eyes, "when I tell you that no sooner had I set my foot upon that treacherous shore ——"

Here Sniff, either busting out mad, or thinking aloud, says, in a low voice: "Feet. Plural, you know."

The cowering that come upon him when he was spurned by all eyes, added to his being beneath contempt, was sufficient punishment for a cove so grovelling. In the midst of a silence rendered more impressive by the turned-up female noses with which it was pervaded, Our Missis went on:

"Shall I be believed when I tell you that no sooner had I landed," this word with a killing look at Sniff, "on that treacherous shore, than I was ushered into a Refreshment Room where there were, I do not exaggerate, actually eatable things to eat?"

A groan burst from the ladies. I not only did myself the honour of jining, but also of lengthening it out.

"Where there were," Our Missis added, "not only eatable things to eat, but also drinkable things to drink?"

A murmur, swelling almost into a scream, ariz. Miss Piff, trembling with indignation, called out: "Name!"

"I *will* name," said Our Missis. "There was roast fowls, hot and cold; there was smoking roast veal sur-

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rounded with browned potatoes; there was hot soup with (again I ask shall I be credited?) nothing bitter in it, and no flour to choke off the consumer; there was a variety of cold dishes set off with jelly; there was salad; there was — mark me! — *fresh* pastry, and that of a light construction; there was a luscious show of fruit. There was bottles and decanters of sound small wine, of every size and adapted to every pocket; the same odious statement will apply to brandy; and these were set out upon the counter so that all could help themselves."

Our Missis's lips so quivered, that Mrs. Sniff, though scarcely less convulsed than she were, got up and held the tumbler to them.

"This," proceeds Our Missis, "was my first unconstitutional experience. Well would it have been, if it had been my last and worst. But no. As I proceeded further into that enslaved and ignorant land, its aspect became more hideous. I need not explain to this assembly, the ingredients and formation of the British Refreshment sangwich?"

Universal laughter — except from Sniff, who, as sangwich-cutter, shook his head in a state of the utmost dejection as he stood with it agin the wall.

"Well!" said Our Missis, with dilated nostrils. "Take a fresh crisp long crusty penny loaf made of the whitest and best flour. Cut it longwise through the middle. Insert a fair and nicely fitting slice of ham. Tie a smart piece of ribbon round the middle of the whole to bind it together. Add at one end a neat wrapper of clean white paper by which to hold it. And the universal French Refreshment sangwich busts on your disgusted vision."

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A cry of "Shame!" from all — except Sniff, which rubbed his stomach with a soothing hand.

"I need not," said Our Missis, "explain to this assembly, the usual formation and fitting of the British Refreshment Room?"

No, no, and laughter. Sniff agin shaking his head in low spirits agin the wall.

"Well," said Our Missis, "what would you say to a general decoration of everythink, to hangings (sometimes elegant), to easy velvet furniture, to abundance of little tables, to abundance of little seats, to brisk bright waiters, to great convenience, to a pervading cleanliness and tastefulness positively addressing the public and making the Beast thinking itself worth the pains?"

Contemptous fury on the part of all the ladies. Mrs. Sniff looking as if she wanted somebody to hold her, and everybody else looking as if they'd raythe not.

"Three times," said Our Missis, working herself into a truly terrimenjious state, "three times did I see these shamful things, only between the coast and Paris, and not counting either: at Hazebroucke, at Arras, at Amiens. But worse remains. Tell me, what would you call a person who should propose in England that there should be kept, say at our own model Mugby Junction, pretty baskets, each holding an assorted cold lunch and dessert for one, each at a certain fixed price, and each within a passenger's power to take away, to empty in the carriage at perfect leisure, and to return at another station fifty or a hundred miles further on?"

There was disagreement what such a person should be called. Whether revolutionist, atheist, Bright (*I*

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said him), or Un-English. Miss Piff screeched her shrill opinion last, in the words: "A malignant maniac!"

"I adopt," says Our Missis, "the brand set upon such a person by the righteous indignation of my friend Miss Piff. A malignant maniac. Know then, that that malignant maniac has sprung from the congenial soil of France, and that his malignant madness was in unchecked action on this same part of my journey."

I noticed that Sniff was a rubbing his hands, and that Mrs. Sniff had got her eye upon him. But I did not take more particular notice, owing to the excited state in which the young ladies was, and to feeling myself called upon to keep it up with a howl.

"On my experience south of Paris," said Our Missis, in a deep tone, "I will not expatiate. Too loathsome were the task! But fancy this. Fancy a guard coming round, with the train at full speed, to inquire how many for dinner. Fancy his telegraphing forward, the number of diners. Fancy every one expected, and the table elegantly laid for the complete party. Fancy a charming dinner, in a charming room, and the head-cook, concerned for the honour of every dish, superintending in his clean white jacket and cap. Fancy the Beast travelling six hundred miles on end, very fast, and with great punctuality, yet being taught to expect all this to be done for it!"

A spirited chorus of "The Beast!"

I noticed that Sniff was agin a rubbing his stomach with a soothing hand, and that he had drored up one leg. But agin I didn't take particular notice, looking on myself as called upon to stimilate public feeling. It being a lark besides.

"Putting everything together," said Our Missis,

"French Refreshmenting comes to this, and O it comes to a nice total! First: eatable things to eat, and drinkable things to drink."

A groan from the young ladies, kep' up by me.

"Second: convenience, and even elegance."

Another groan from the young ladies, kep' up by me.

"Third: moderate charges."

This time, a groan from me, kep' up by the young ladies.

"Fourth: — and here," says Our Missis, "I claim your angriest sympathy — attention, common civility, nay, even politeness!"

Me and the young ladies regularly raging mad all together.

"And I cannot in conclusion," says Our Missis, with her spitefullest sneer, "give you a completer pictur of that despicable nation (after what I have related), than assuring you that they wouldn't bear our constitutional ways and noble independence at Mugby Junction, for a single month, and that they would turn us to the right-about and put another system in our places, as soon as look at us; perhaps sooner, for I do not believe they have the good taste to care to look at us twice."

The swelling tumult was arrested in its rise. Sniff, bore away by his servile disposition, had drored up his leg with a higher and a higher relish, and was now discovered to be waving his corkscrew over his head. It was at this moment that Mrs. Sniff, who had kep' her eye upon him like the fabled obelisk, descended on her victim. Our Missis followed them both out, and cries was heard in the sawdust department.

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You come into the Down Refreshment Room, at the Junction, making believe you don't know me, and I'll pint you out with my right thumb over my shoulder which is Our Missis, and which is Miss Whiff, and which is Miss Piff, and which is Mrs. Sniff. But you won't get a chance to see Sniff, because he disappeared that night. Whether he perished, tore to pieces, I cannot say; but his corkscrew alone remains, to bear witness to the servility of his disposition.

No. 1 BRANCH LINE.
THE SIGNAL-MAN.

"Halloa! Below there!"

When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furled round its short pole. One would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but, instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about and looked down the Line. There was something remarkable in his manner of doing so, though I could not have said, for my life, what. But, I know it was remarkable enough to attract my notice, even though his figure was foreshortened and shadowed, down in the deep trench, and mine was high above him, so steeped in the glow of an angry sunset that I had shaded my eyes with my hand before I saw him at all.

"Halloa! Below!"

From looking down the Line, he turned himself

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about again, and, raising his eyes, saw my figure high above him.

"Is there any path by which I can come down and speak to you?"

He looked up at me without replying, and I looked down at him without pressing him too soon with a repetition of my idle question. Just then, there came a vague vibration in the earth and air, quickly changing into a violent pulsation, and an oncoming rush that caused me to start back, as though it had force to draw me down. When such vapour as rose to my height from this rapid train, had passed me and was skimming away over the landscape, I looked down again, and saw him re-furling the flag he had shown while the train went by.

I repeated my inquiry. After a pause, during which he seemed to regard me with fixed attention, he motioned with his rolled-up flag towards a point on my level, some two or three hundred yards distant. I called down to him, "All right!" and made for that point. There, by dint of looking closely about me, I found a rough zig-zag descending path notched out: which I followed.

The cutting was extremely deep, and unusually precipitate. It was made through a clammy stone that became oozier and wetter as I went down. For these reasons, I found the way long enough to give me time to recal a singular air of reluctance or compulsion with which he had pointed out the path.

When I came down low enough upon the zig-zag descent, to see him again, I saw that he was standing between the rails on the way by which the train had lately passed, in an attitude as if he were waiting for

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me to appear. He had his left hand at his chin, and that left elbow rested on his right hand crossed over his breast. His attitude was one of such expectation and watchfulness, that I stopped a moment, wondering at it.

I resumed my downward way, and, stepping out upon the level of the railroad and drawing nearer to him, saw that he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eyebrows. His post was in as solitary and dismal a place as ever I saw. On either side, a dripping-wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky; the perspective one way, only a crooked prolongation of this great dungeon; the shorter perspective in the other direction, terminating in a gloomy red light, and the gloomier entrance to a black tunnel, in whose massive architecture there was a barbarous, depressing, and forbidding air. So little sunlight ever found its way to this spot, that it had an earthy deadly smell; and so much cold wind rushed through it, that it struck chill to me, as if I had left the natural world.

Before he stirred, I was near enough to him to have touched him. Not even then removing his eyes from mine, he stepped back one step, and lifted his hand.

This was a lonesome post to occupy (I said), and it had riveted my attention when I looked down from up yonder. A visitor was a rarity, I should suppose; not an unwelcome rarity, I hoped? In me, he merely saw a man who had been shut up within narrow limits all his life, and who, being at last set free, had a newly-awakened interest in these great works. To such purpose I spoke to him; but I am far from sure

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of the terms I used, for, besides that I am not happy in opening any conversation, there was something in the man that daunted me.

He directed a most curious look towards the red light near the tunnel's mouth, and looked all about it, as if something were missing from it, and then looked at me.

That light was part of his charge? Was it not?

He answered in a low voice: "Don't you know it is?"

The monstrous thought came into my mind as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine face, that this was a spirit, not a man. I have speculated since, whether there may have been infection in his mind.

In my turn, I stepped back. But in making the action, I detected in his eyes some latent fear of me. This put the monstrous thought to flight.

"You look at me," I said, forcing a smile, "as if you had a dread of me."

"I was doubtful," he returned, "whether I had seen you before."

"Where?"

He pointed to the red light he had looked at.

"There?" I said.

Intently watchful of me, he replied (but without sound), Yes.

"My good fellow, what should I do there? However, be that as it may, I never was there, you may swear."

"I think I may," he rejoined. "Yes. I am sure I may."

His manner cleared, like my own. He replied to my remarks with readiness, and in well-chosen words.

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Had he much to do there? Yes; that was to say, he had enough responsibility to bear; but exactness and watchfulness were what was required of him, and of actual work — manual labour — he had next to none. To change that signal, to trim those lights, and to turn this iron handle now and then, was all he had to do under that head. Regarding those many long and lonely hours of which I seemed to make so much, he could only say that the routine of his life had shaped itself into that form, and he had grown used to it. He had taught himself a language down here — if only to know it by sight, and to have formed his own crude ideas of its pronunciation, could be called learning it. He had also worked at fractions and decimals, and tried a little algebra; but he was, and had been as a boy, a poor hand at figures. Was it necessary for him when on duty, always to remain in that channel of damp air, and could he never rise into the sunshine from between those high stone walls? Why, that depended upon times and circumstances. Under some conditions there would be less upon the Line than under others, and the same held good as to certain hours of the day and night. In bright weather, he did choose occasions for getting a little above these lower shadows; but, being at all times liable to be called by his electric bell, and at such times listening for it with redoubled anxiety, the relief was less than I would suppose.

He took me into his box, where there was a fire, a desk for an official book in which he had to make certain entries, a telegraphic instrument with its dial face and needles, and the little bell of which he had spoken. On my trusting that he would excuse the re-

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mark that he had been well educated, and (I hoped I might say without offence), perhaps educated above that station, he observed that instances of slight incongruity in such-wise would rarely be found wanting among large bodies of men; that he had heard it was so in workhouses, in the police force, even in that last desperate resource, the army; and that he knew it was so, more or less, in any great railway staff. He had been, when young (if I could believe it, sitting in that hut; he scarcely could), a student of natural philosophy, and had attended lectures; but he had run wild, misused his opportunities, gone down, and never risen again. He had no complaint to offer about that. He had made his bed, and he lay upon it. It was far too late to make another.

All that I have here condensed, he said in a quiet manner, with his grave dark regards divided between me and the fire. He threw in the word "Sir," from time to time, and especially when he referred to his youth: as though to request me to understand that he claimed to be nothing but what I found him. He was several times interrupted by the little bell, and had to read off messages, and send replies. Once, he had to stand without the door, and display a flag as a train passed, and make some verbal communication to the driver. In the discharge of his duties I observed him to be remarkably exact and vigilant, breaking off his discourse at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done.

In a word, I should have set this man down as one of the safest of men to be employed in that capacity, but for the circumstance that while he was speaking to me he twice broke off with a fallen colour, turned his

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face towards the little bell when it did NOT ring, opened the door of the hut (which was kept shut to exclude the unhealthy damp), and looked out towards the red light near the mouth of the tunnel. On both of those occasions, he came back to the fire with the inexplicable air upon him which I had remarked, without being able to define, when we were so far asunder.

Said I when I rose to leave him: "You almost make me think that I have met with a contented man."

(I am afraid I must acknowledge that I said it to lead him on.)

"I believe I used to be so," he rejoined, in the low voice in which he had first spoken; "but I am troubled, sir, I am troubled."

He would have recalled the words if he could. He had said them, however, and I took them up quickly.

"With what? What is your trouble?"

"It is very difficult to impart, sir. It is very, very, difficult to speak of. If ever you make me another visit, I will try to tell you."

"But I expressly intend to make you another visit. Say, when shall it be?"

"I go off early in the morning, and I shall be on again at ten to-morrow night, sir."

"I will come at eleven."

He thanked me, and went out at the door with me. "I'll show my white light, sir," he said, in his peculiar low voice, "till you have found the way up. When you have found it, don't call out! And when you are at the top, don't call out!"

His manner seemed to make the place strike colder to me, but I said no more than "Very well."

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"And when you come down to-morrow night, don't call out! Let me ask you a parting question. What made you cry 'Halloa! Below there!' to-night?"

"Heaven knows," said I. "I cried something to that effect ——"

"Not to that effect, sir. Those were the very words. I know them well."

"Admit those were the very words. I said them, no doubt, because I saw you below."

"For no other reason?"

"What other reason could I possibly have!"

"You had no feeling that they were conveyed to you in any supernatural way?"

"No."

He wished me good night, and held up his light. I walked by the side of the down Line of rails (with a very disagreeable sensation of a train coming behind me), until I found the path. It was easier to mount than to descend, and I got back to my inn without any adventure.

Punctual to my appointment, I placed my foot on the first notch of the zig-zag next night as the distant clocks were striking eleven. He was waiting for me at the bottom, with his white light on. "I have not called out," I said, when we came close together; "may I speak now?" "By all means, sir." "Good night then, and here's my hand." "Good night, sir, and here's mine." With that, we walked side by side to his box, entered it, closed the door, and sat down by the fire.

"I have made up my mind, sir," he began, bending forward as soon as we were seated, and speaking in a tone but a little above a whisper, "that you shall

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not have to ask me twice what troubles me. I took you for some one else yesterday evening. That troubles me."

"That mistake?"

"No. That some one else."

"Who is it?"

"I don't know."

"Like me?"

"I don't know. I never saw the face. The left arm is across the face, and the right arm is waved. Violently waved. This way."

I followed his action with my eyes, and it was the action of an arm gesticulating with the utmost passion and vehemence: "For God's sake clear the way!"

"One moonlight night," said the man, "I was sitting here, when I heard a voice cry 'Halloa! Below there!' I started up, looked from that door, and saw this Some one else standing by the red light near the tunnel, waving as I just now showed you. The voice seemed hoarse with shouting, and it cried, 'Look out! Look out!' And then again 'Halloa! Below there! Look out!' I caught up my lamp, turned it on red, and ran towards the figure, calling, 'What's wrong? What has happened? Where?' It stood just outside the blackness of the tunnel. I advanced so close upon it that I wondered at its keeping the sleeve across its eyes. I ran right up at it, and had my hand stretched out to pull the sleeve away, when it was gone."

"Into the tunnel," said I.

"No. I ran on into the tunnel, five hundred yards. I stopped and held my lamp above my head, and saw the figures of the measured distance, and saw the wet stains stealing down the walls and trickling through

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the arch. I ran out again, faster than I had run in (for I had a mortal abhorrence of the place upon me), and I looked all round the red light with my own red light, and I went up the iron ladder to the gallery atop of it, and I came down again, and ran back here. I telegraphed both ways: 'An alarm has been given. Is anything wrong?' The answer came back, both ways: 'All well.'"

Resisting the slow touch of a frozen finger tracing out my spine, I showed him how that this figure must be a deception of his sense of sight, and how that figures, originating in disease of the delicate nerves that minister to the functions of the eye, were known to have often troubled patients, some of whom had become conscious of the nature of their affliction, and had even proved it by experiments upon themselves. "As to an imaginary cry," said I, "do but listen for a moment to the wind in this unnatural valley while we speak so low, and to the wild harp it makes of the telegraph wires!"

That was all very well, he returned, after we had sat listening for a while, and he ought to know something of the wind and the wires, he who so often passed long winter nights there, alone and watching. But he would beg to remark that he had not finished.

I asked his pardon, and he slowly added these words, touching my arm:

"Within six hours after the Appearance, the memorable accident on this Line happened, and within ten hours the dead and wounded were brought along through the tunnel over the spot where the figure had stood."

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A disagreeable shudder crept over me, but I did my best against it. It was not to be denied, I rejoined, that this was a remarkable coincidence, calculated deeply to impress his mind. But, it was unquestionable that remarkable coincidences did continually occur, and they must be taken into account in dealing with such a subject. Though to be sure I must admit, I added (for I thought I saw that he was going to bring the objection to bear upon me), men of common sense did not allow much for coincidences in making the ordinary calculations of life.

He again begged to remark that he had not finished.

I again begged his pardon for being betrayed into interruptions.

"This," he said, again laying his hand upon my arm, and glancing over his shoulder with hollow eyes, "was just a year ago. Six or seven months passed, and I had recovered from the surprise and shock, when one morning, as the day was breaking, I, standing at that door, looked towards the red light, and saw the spectre again." He stopped, with a fixed look at me.

"Did it cry out?"

"No. It was silent."

"Did it wave its arm?"

"No. It leaned against the shaft of the light, with both hands before the face. Like this."

Once more, I followed his action with my eyes. It was an action of mourning. I have seen such an attitude in stone figures on tombs.

"Did you go up to it?"

"I came in and sat down, partly to collect my

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thoughts, partly because it had turned me faint. When I went to the door again, daylight was above me, and the ghost was gone."

"But nothing followed? Nothing came of this?"

He touched me on the arm with his forefinger twice or thrice, giving a ghastly nod each time:

"That very day, as a train came out of the tunnel, I noticed, at a carriage window on my side, what looked like a confusion of hands and heads, and something waved. I saw it, just in time to signal the driver, Stop! He shut off, and put his brake on, but the train drifted past here a hundred and fifty yards or more. I ran after it, and, as I went along, heard terrible screams and cries. A beautiful young lady had died instantaneously in one of the compartments, and was brought in here, and laid down on this floor between us."

Involuntarily, I pushed my chair back, as I looked from the boards at which he pointed, to himself.

"True, sir. True. Precisely as it happened, so I tell it you."

I could think of nothing to say, to any purpose, and my mouth was very dry. The wind and the wires took up the story with a long lamenting wail.

He resumed. "Now, sir, mark this, and judge how my mind is troubled. The spectre came back, a week ago. Ever since, it has been there, now and again, by fits and starts."

"At the light?"

"At the Danger-light."

"What does it seem to do?"

He repeated, if possible with increased passion and

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vehemence, that former gesticulation of "For God's sake clear the way!"

Then, he went on. "I have no peace or rest for it. It calls to me, for many minutes together, in an agonised manner, 'Below there! Look out! Look out!' It stands waving to me. It rings my little bell ——"

I caught at that. "Did it ring your bell yesterday evening when I was here, and you went to the door?"

"Twice."

"Why, see," said I, "how your imagination misleads you. My eyes were on the bell, and my ears were open to the bell, and if I am a living man, it did NOT ring at those times. No, nor at any other time, except when it was rung in the natural course of physical things by the station communicating with you."

He shook his head. "I have never made a mistake as to that, yet, sir. I have never confused the spectre's ring with the man's. The ghost's ring is a strange vibration in the bell that it derives from nothing else, and I have not asserted that the bell stirs to the eye. I don't wonder that you failed to hear it. But *I* heard it."

"And did the spectre seem to be there, when you looked out?"

"It WAS there."

"Both times?"

He repeated firmly; "Both times."

"Will you come to the door with me, and look for it now?"

He bit his under-lip as though he were somewhat unwilling, but arose. I opened the door, and stood

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on the step, while he stood in the doorway. There, was the Danger-light. There, was the dismal mouth of the tunnel. There, were the high wet stone walls of the cutting. There, were the stars above them.

"Do you see it?" I asked him, taking particular note of his face. His eyes were prominent and strained; but not very much more so, perhaps, than my own had been when I had directed them earnestly towards the same spot.

"No," he answered. "It is not there."

"Agreed," said I.

We went in again, shut the door, and resumed our seats. I was thinking how best to improve this advantage, if it might be called one, when he took up the conversation in such a matter of course way, so assuming that there could be no serious question of fact between us, that I felt myself placed in the weakest of positions.

"By this time you will fully understand, sir," he said, "that what troubles me so dreadfully, is the question, What does the spectre mean?"

I was not sure, I told him, that I did fully understand.

"What is its warning against?" he said, ruminating, with his eyes on the fire, and only by times turning them on me. "What is the danger? Where is the danger? There is danger overhanging, somewhere on the Line. Some dreadful calamity will happen. It is not to be doubted this third time, after what has gone before. But surely this is a cruel haunting of *me*. What can *I* do!"

He pulled out his handkerchief, and wiped the drops from his heated forehead.

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"If I telegraph Danger, on either side of me, or on both, I can give no reason for it," he went on, wiping the palms of his hands. "I should get into trouble, and do no good. They would think I was mad. This is the way it would work: — Message: 'Danger! Take care!' Answer: "What Danger? Where?' Message: 'Don't know. But for God's sake take care!' They would displace me. What else could they do?"

His pain of mind was most pitiable to see. It was the mental torture of a conscientious man, oppressed beyond endurance by an unintelligible responsibility involving life.

"When it first stood under the Danger-light," he went on, putting his dark hair back from his head, and drawing his hands outward across and across his temples in an extremity of feverish distress, "why not tell me where that accident was to happen — if it must happen? Why not tell me how it could be averted — if it could have been averted? When on its second coming it hid its face, why not tell me instead: 'She is going to die. Let them keep her at home'? If it came, on those two occasions, only to show me that its warnings were true, and so to prepare me for the third, why not warn me plainly now? And I, Lord help me! A mere poor signalman on this solitary station! Why not go to somebody with credit to be believed, and power to act!"

When I saw him in this state, I saw that for the poor man's sake, as well as for the public safety, what I had to do for the time was, to compose his mind. Therefore, setting aside all question of reality or unreality between us, I represented to him that whoever thoroughly discharged his duty, must do well, and that

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at least it was his comfort that he understood his duty, though he did not understand these confounding Appearances. In this effort I succeeded far better than in the attempt to reason him out of his conviction. He became calm; the occupations incidental to his post as the night advanced, began to make larger demands on his attention; and I left him at two in the morning. I had offered to stay through the night, but he would not hear of it.

That I more than once looked back at the red light as I ascended the pathway, that I did not like the red light, and that I should have slept but poorly if my bed had been under it, I see no reason to conceal. Nor, did I like the two sequences of the accident and the dead girl. I see no reason to conceal that, either.

But, what ran most in my thoughts was the consideration how ought I to act, having become the recipient of this disclosure? I had proved the man to be intelligent, vigilant, painstaking, and exact; but how long might he remain so, in his state of mind? Though in a subordinate position, still he held a most important trust, and would I (for instance) like to stake my own life on the chances of his continuing to execute it with precision?

Unable to overcome a feeling that there would be something treacherous in my communicating what he had told me, to his superiors in the Company, without first being plain with himself and proposing a middle course to him, I ultimately resolved to offer to accompany him (otherwise keeping his secret for the present) to the wisest medical practitioner we could hear of in those parts, and to take his opinion. A change in his

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time of duty would come round next night, he had apprised me, and he would be off an hour or two after sunrise, and on again soon after sunset. I had appointed to return accordingly.

Next evening was a lovely evening, and I walked out early to enjoy it. The sun was not yet quite down when I traversed the field-path near the top of the deep cutting. I would extend my walk for an hour, I said to myself, half an hour on and half an hour back, and it would then be time to go to my signalman's box.

Before pursuing my stroll, I stepped to the brink, and mechanically looked down, from the point from which I had first seen him. I cannot describe the thrill that seized upon me, when, close at the mouth of the tunnel, I saw the appearance of a man, with his left sleeve across his eyes, passionately waving his right arm.

The nameless horror that oppressed me, passed in a moment, for in a moment I saw that this appearance of a man was a man indeed, and that there was a little group of other men standing at a short distance, to whom he seemed to be rehearsing the gesture he made. The Danger-light was not yet lighted. Against its shaft, a little low hut, entirely new to me, had been made of some wooden supports and tarpaulin. It looked no bigger than a bed.

With an irresistible sense that something was wrong — with a flashing self-reproachful fear that fatal mischief had come of my leaving the man there, and causing no one to be sent to overlook or correct what he did — I descended the notched path with all the speed I could make.

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"What is the matter?" I asked the men.

"Signalman killed this morning, sir."

"Not the man belonging to that box?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not the man I know?"

"You will recognise him, sir, if you knew him," said the man who spoke for the others, solemnly uncovering his own head and raising an end of the tarpaulin, "for his face is quite composed."

"O! how did this happen, how did this happen?" I asked, turning from one to another as the hut closed in again.

"He was cut down by an engine, sir. No man in England knew his work better. But somehow he was not clear of the outer rail. It was just at broad day. He had struck the light, and had the lamp in his hand. As the engine came out of the tunnel, his back was towards her, and she cut him down. That man drove her, and was showing how it happened. Show the gentleman, Tom."

The man, who wore a rough dark dress, stepped back to his former place at the mouth of the tunnel:

"Coming round the curve in the tunnel, sir," he said, "I saw him at the end, like as if I saw him down a perspective-glass. There was no time to check speed, and I knew him to be very careful. As he didn't seem to take heed of the whistle, I shut it off when we were running down upon him, and called to him as loud as I could call."

"What did you say?"

"I said, Below there! Look out! Look out! For God's sake clear the way!"

I started.

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"Ah! it was a dreadful time, sir. I never left off calling to him. I put this arm before my eyes, not to see, and I waved this arm to the last; but it was no use."

Without prolonging the narrative to dwell on any one of its curious circumstances more than on any other, I may, in closing it, point out the coincidence that the warning of the Engine-Driver included, not only the words which the unfortunate Signalman had repeated to me as haunting him, but also the words which I myself — not he — had attached, and that only in my own mind, to the gesticulation he had imitated.

No. 2 BRANCH LINE.
THE ENGINE-DRIVER.

"Altogether? Well. Altogether, since 1841, I've killed seven men and boys. It ain't many in all those years."

These startling words he uttered in a serious tone as he leaned against the Station-wall. He was a thick-set, ruddy-faced man, with coal-black eyes, the whites of which were not white, but a brownish-yellow, and apparently scarred and seamed, as if they had been operated upon. They were eyes that had worked hard in looking through wind and weather. He was dressed in a short black pea-jacket and grimy white canvas trousers, and wore on his head a flat black cap. There was no sign of levity in his face. His look was serious even to sadness, and there was an air of responsibility

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about his whole bearing which assured me that he spoke in earnest.

"Yes, sir, I have been for five-and-twenty years a Locomotive Engine-driver; and in all that time, I've only killed seven men and boys. There's not many of my mates as can say as much for themselves. Steadiness, sir — steadiness and keeping your eyes open, is what does it. When I say seven men and boys, I mean my mates — stokers, porters, and so forth. I don't count passengers."

How did he become an engine-driver?

"My father," he said, "was a wheelwright in a small way, and lived in a little cottage by the side of the railway which runs betwixt Leeds and Selby. It was the second railway laid down in the kingdom, the second after the Liverpool and Manchester, where Mr. Huskisson was killed, as you may have heard on, sir. When the trains rushed by, we young 'uns used to run out to look at 'em, and hooray. I noticed the driver turning handles, and making it go, and I thought to myself it would be a fine thing to be a engine-driver, and have the control of a wonderful machine like that. Before the railway, the driver of the mail-coach was the biggest man I knew. I thought I should like to be the driver of a coach. We had a picture in our cottage of George the Third in a red coat. I always mixed up the driver of the mail-coach — who had a red coat, too — with the king, only he had a low-crowned broad-brimmed hat, which the king hadn't. In my idea, the king couldn't be a greater man than the driver of the mail-coach. I had always a fancy to be a head man of some kind. When I went to Leeds

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once, and saw a man conducting a orchestra, I thought I should like to be the conductor of a orchestra. When I went home I made myself a bâton, and went about the fields conducting a orchestra. It wasn't there, of course, but I pretended it was. At another time, a man with a whip and a speaking-trumpet, on the stage outside a show, took my fancy, and I thought I should like to be him. But when the train came, the engine-driver put them all in the shade, and I was resolved to be a engine-driver. It wasn't long before I had to do something to earn my own living, though I was only a young 'un. My father died suddenly — he was killed by thunder and lightning while standing under a tree out of the rain — and mother couldn't keep us all. The day after my father's burial I walked down to the station, and said I wanted to be a engine-driver. The station-master laughed a bit, said I was for beginning early, but that I was not quite big enough yet. He gave me a penny, and told me to go home and grow, and come again in ten years' time. I didn't dream of danger then. If I couldn't be a engine-driver, I was determined to have something to do about a engine; so, as I could get nothing else, I went on board a Humber steamer, and broke up coals for the stoker. That was how I began. From that, I became a stoker, first on board a boat, and then on a locomotive. Then, after two years' service, I became a driver on the very Line which passed our cottage. My mother and my brothers and sisters came out to look at me, the first day I drove. I was watching for them and they was watching for me, and they waved their hands and hoora'd, and I waved my hand to them. I had the steam well up, and was going at a rattling

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pace, and rare proud I was that minute. Never was so proud in my life!

"When a man has a liking for a thing it's as good as being clever. In a very short time I became one of the best drivers on the Line. That was allowed. I took a pride in it, you see, and liked it. No, I didn't know much about the engine scientifically, as you call it; but I could put her to rights if anything went out of gear — that is to say, if there was nothing broken — but I couldn't have explained how the steam worked inside. Starting a engine, is just like drawing a drop of gin. You turn a handle and off she goes; then you turn the handle the other way, put on the brakes, and you stop her. There's not much more in it, so far. It's no good being scientific and knowing the principle of the engine inside; no good at all. Fitters, who know all the ins and outs of the engine, make the worst drivers. That's well known. They know too much. It's just as I've heard of a man with regard to *his* inside: if he knew what a complicated machine it is, he would never eat, or drink, or dance, or run, or do anything, for fear of busting something. So it is with fitters. But us as are not troubled with such thoughts, *we* go ahead.

"But starting a engine's one thing and driving of her is another. Any one, a child a'most, can turn on the steam and turn it off again; but it ain't every one that can keep a engine well on the road, no more than it ain't every one who can ride a horse properly. It is much the same thing. If you gallop a horse right off for a mile or two, you take the wind out of him, and for the next mile or two you must let him trot or walk. So it is with a engine. If you put on too much

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steam, to get over the ground at the start, you exhaust the boiler, and then you'll have to crawl along till your fresh water boils up. The great thing in driving, is, to go steady, never to let your water get too low, nor your fire too low. It's the same with a kettle. If you fill it up when it's about half empty, it soon comes to the boil again; but if you don't fill it up until the water's nearly out, it's a long time in coming to the boil again. Another thing; you should never make spurts, unless you are detained and lose time. You should go up a incline and down a incline at the same pace. Sometimes a driver will waste his steam, and when he comes to a hill he has scarcely enough to drag him up. When you're in a train that goes by fits and starts, you may be sure that there is a bad driver on the engine. That kind of driving frightens passengers dreadful. When the train, after rattling along, suddenly slackens speed when it ain't near a station, it may be in the middle of a tunnel, the passengers think there is danger. But generally it's because the driver has exhausted his steam.

"I drove the Brighton express, four or five years before I come here, and the annuals — that is, the passengers who had annual tickets — always said they knew when I was on the engine, because they wasn't jerked. Gentlemen used to say as they came on to the platform, 'Who drives to-day — Jim Martin?' And when the guard told them yes, they said 'All right,' and took their seats quite comfortable. But the driver never gets so much as a shilling; the guard comes in for all that, and he does nothing much. Few ever think of the driver. I dare say they think the train goes along of itself; yet if we didn't keep a

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sharp look-out, know our duty, and do it, they might all go smash at any moment. I used to make that journey to Brighton in fifty-two minutes. The papers said forty-nine minutes, but that was coming it a little too strong. I had to watch signals all the way, one every two miles, so that me and my stoker were on the stretch all the time, doing two things at once — attending to the engine and looking out. I've driven on this Line, eighty-one miles and three-quarters, in eighty-six minutes. There's no danger in speed if you have a good road, a good engine, and not too many coaches behind. No, we don't call them carriages, we call them 'coaches.'

"Yes; oscillation means danger. If you're ever in a coach that oscillates much, tell of it at the first station and get it coupled up closer. Coaches when they're too loose are apt to jump, or swing off the rails; and it's quite as dangerous when they're coupled up too close. There ought to be just space enough for the buffers to work easy. Passengers are frightened in tunnels, but there's less danger, *now*, in tunnels than anywhere else. We never enter a tunnel unless it's signalled Clear.

"A train can be stopped wonderful quick, even when running express, if the guards act with the driver and clap on all the brakes promptly. Much depends upon the guards. One brake behind, is as good as two in front. The engine, you see, loses weight as she burns her coals and consumes her water, but the coaches behind don't alter. We have a good deal of trouble with young guards. In their anxiety to perform their duties; they put on the brakes too soon, so that sometimes we can scarcely drag the train into the

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station; when they grow older at it they are not so anxious, and don't put them on soon enough. It's no use to say, when an accident happens, that they did not put on the brakes in time; they swear they did, and you can't prove that they didn't.

"Do I think that the tapping of the wheels with a hammer is a mere ceremony? Well, I don't know exactly; I should not like to say. It's not often that the chaps find anything wrong. They may sometimes be half asleep when a train comes into a station in the middle of the night. You would be yourself. They ought to tap the axle-box, but they don't.

"Many accidents take place that never get into the papers; many trains, full of passengers, escape being dashed to pieces by next door to a miracle. Nobody knows anything about it but the driver and the stoker. I remember once, when I was driving on the Eastern Counties. Going round a curve, I suddenly saw a train coming along on the same line of rails. I clapped on the brake, but it was too late, I thought. Seeing the engine almost close upon us, I cried to my stoker to jump. He jumped off the engine, almost before the words were out of my mouth. I was just taking my hand off the lever to follow, when the coming train turned off on the points, and the next instant the hind coach passed my engine by a shave. It was the nearest touch I ever saw. My stoker was killed. In another half second I should have jumped off and been killed too. What would have become of the train without us is more than I can tell you.

"There are heaps of people run over that no one ever hears about. One dark night in the Black

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Country, me and my mate felt something wet and warm splash in our faces. 'That didn't come from the engine, Bill,' I said. 'No,' he said; 'it's something thick, Jim.' It was blood. That's what it was. We heard afterwards that a collier had been run over. When we kill any of our own chaps, we say as little about it as possible. It's generally — mostly always — their own fault. No, we never think of danger ourselves. We're used to it, you see. But we're not reckless. I don't believe there's any body of men that takes more pride in their work than engine-drivers do. We are as proud and as fond of our engines as if they were living things; as proud of them as a huntsman or a jockey is of his horse. And a engine has almost as many ways as a horse; she's a kicker, a plunger, a roarer, or what not, in her way. Put a stranger on to my engine, and he wouldn't know what to do with her. Yes; there's wonderful improvements in engines since the last great Exhibition. Some of them take up their water without stopping. That's a wonderful invention, and yet as simple as A B C. There are water-troughs at certain places, lying between the rails. By moving a lever you let down the mouth of a scoop into the water, and as you rush along the water is forced into the tank, at the rate of three thousand gallons a minute.

"A engine-driver's chief anxiety is to keep time; that's what he thinks most of. When I was driving the Brighton express, I always felt like as if I was riding a race against time. I had no fear of the pace; what I feared was losing way, and not getting in to the minute. We have to give in an account of our time when we arrive. The company provides us with

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watches, and we go by them. Before starting on a journey, we pass through a room to be inspected. That's to see if we are sober. But they don't say nothing to us, and a man who was a little gone might pass easy. I've known a stoker that had passed the inspection, come on to the engine as drunk as a fly, flop down among the coals, and sleep there like a log for the whole run. I had to be my own stoker then. If you ask me if engine-drivers are drinking men, I must answer you that they are pretty well. It's trying work; one half of you cold as ice; t'other half hot as fire; wet one minute, dry the next. If ever a man had an excuse for drinking, that man's a engine-driver. And yet I don't know if ever a driver goes upon his engine drunk. If he was to, the wind would soon sober him.

"I believe engine-drivers, as a body, are the healthiest fellows alive; but they don't live long. The cause of that, I believe to be the cold food, and the shaking. By the cold food, I mean that a engine-driver never gets his meals comfortable. He's never at home to his dinner. When he starts away the first thing in the morning, he takes a bit of cold meat and a piece of bread with him for his dinner; and generally he has to eat it in the shed, for he mustn't leave his engine. You can understand how the jolting and shaking knocks a man up, after a bit. The insurance companies won't take us at ordinary rates. We're obliged to be Foresters, or Old Friends, or that sort of thing, where they ain't so particular. The wages of a engine-driver average about eight shillings a day, but if he's a good schemer with his coals — yes, I mean if he economises his coals — he's allowed so

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much more. Some will make from five to ten shillings a week that way. I don't complain of the wages particular; but it's hard lines for such as us, to have to pay income-tax. The company gives an account of all our wages, and we have to pay. It's a shame.

"Our domestic life — our life at home, you mean? Well, as to that, we don't see much of our families. I leave home at half-past seven in the morning, and don't get back again until half-past nine, or maybe later. The children are not up when I leave, and they've gone to bed again before I come home. This is about my day: — Leave London at 8.45; drive for four hours and a half; cold snack on the engine step; see to engine; drive back again; clean engine; report myself; and home. Twelve hours' hard and anxious work, and no comfortable victuals. Yes, our wives are anxious about us; for we never know when we go out, if we'll ever come back again. We ought to go home the minute we leave the station, and report ourselves to those that are thinking on us and depending on us; but I'm afraid we don't always. Perhaps we go first to the public-house, and perhaps you would, too, if you were in charge of a engine all day long. But the wives have a way of their own, of finding out if we're all right. They inquire among each other. 'Have you seen my Jim?' one says. 'No,' says another, 'but Jack see him coming out of the station half an hour ago.' Then she knows that her Jim's all right, and knows where to find him if she wants him. It's a sad thing when any of us have to carry bad news to a mate's wife. None of us likes that job. I remember when Jack Davidge was killed, none of us could face his poor missus with the news. She had seven chil-

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dren, poor thing, and two of 'em, the youngest, was down with the fever. We got old Mrs. Berridge — Tom Berridge's mother — to break it to her. But she knew summat was the matter, the minute the old woman went in, and, afore she spoke a word, fell down like as if she was dead. She lay all night like that, and never heard from mortal lips until next morning that her George was killed. But she knew it in her heart. It's a pitch and toss kind of a life ours!

"And yet I never was nervous on a engine but once. I never think of my own life. You go in for staking that, when you begin, and you get used to the risk. I never think of the passengers either. The thoughts of a engine-driver never go behind his engine. If he keeps his engine all right, the coaches behind will be all right, as far as the driver is concerned. But once I *did* think of the passengers. My little boy, Bill, was among them that morning. He was a poor little cripple fellow that we all loved more nor the others, because he *was* a cripple, and so quiet, and wise-like. He was going down to his aunt in the country, who was to take care of him for a while. We thought the country air would do him good. I did think there were lives behind me that morning; at least, I thought hard of one little life that was in my hands. There were twenty coaches on; my little Bill seemed to me to be in every one of 'em. My hand trembled as I turned on the steam. I felt my heart thumping as we drew close to the pointsman's box; as we neared the Junction, I was all in a cold sweat. At the end of the first fifty miles I was nearly eleven minutes behind time. 'What's the matter with you

this morning?' my stoker said. 'Did you have a drop too much last night?' 'Don't speak to me, Fred,' I said, 'till we get to Peterborough; and keep a sharp look-out, there's a good fellow.' I never was so thankful in my life as when I shut off steam to enter the station at Peterborough. Little Bill's aunt was waiting for him, and I saw her lift him out of the carriage. I called out to her to bring him to me, and I took him upon the engine and kissed him — ah, twenty times I should think — making him in such a mess with grease and coal-dust as you never saw.

"I was all right for the rest of the journey. And I do believe, sir, the passengers were safer after little Bill was gone. It would never do, you see, for engine-drivers to know too much, or to feel too much."

No. 3 BRANCH LINE.
THE COMPENSATION HOUSE.

"There's not a looking-glass in all the house, sir. It's some peculiar fancy of my master's. There isn't one in any single room in the house."

It was a dark and gloomy-looking building, and had been purchased by this Company for an enlargement of their Goods Station. The value of the house had been referred to what was popularly called "a compensation jury," and the house was called, in consequence, The Compensation House. It had become the Company's property; but its tenant still remained in possession, pending the commencement of active building operations. My attention was originally drawn to this house because it stood directly in front of a

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collection of huge pieces of timber which lay near this part of the Line, and on which I sometimes sat for half an hour at a time, when I was tired by my wanderings about Mugby Junction.

It was square, cold, grey-looking, built of rough-hewn stone, and roofed with thin slabs of the same material. Its windows were few in number, and very small for the size of the building. In the great blank, grey broadside, there were only four windows. The entrance-door was in the middle of the house; there was a window on either side of it, and there were two more in the single story above. The blinds were all closely drawn, and, when the door was shut, the dreary building gave no sign of life or occupation.

But the door was not always shut. Sometimes it was opened from within, with a great jingling of bolts and door-chains, and then a man would come forward and stand upon the door-step, snuffing the air as one might do who was ordinarily kept on rather a small allowance of that element. He was stout, thickset, and perhaps fifty or sixty years old — a man whose hair was cut exceedingly close, who wore a large bushy beard, and whose eye had a sociable twinkle in it which was prepossessing. He was dressed, whenever I saw him, in a greenish-brown frock-coat made of some material which was not cloth, wore a waistcoat and trousers of light colour, and had a frill to his shirt — an ornament, by the way, which did not seem to go at all well with the beard, which was continually in contact with it. It was the custom of this worthy person, after standing for a short time on the threshold inhaling the air, to come forward into the road, and, after glancing at one of the upper windows

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in a half mechanical way, to cross over to the logs, and, leaning over the fence which guarded the railway, to look up and down the Line (it passed before the house) with the air of a man accomplishing a self-imposed task of which nothing was expected to come. This done, he would cross the road again, and turning on the threshold to take a final sniff of air, disappeared once more within the house, bolting and chaining the door again as if there were no probability of its being reopened for at least a week. Yet half an hour had not passed before he was out in the road again, sniffing the air and looking up and down the Line as before.

It was not very long before I managed to scrape acquaintance with this restless personage. I soon found out that my friend with the shirt-frill was the confidential servant, butler, valet, factotum, what you will, of a sick gentleman, a Mr. Oswald Strange, who had recently come to inhabit the house opposite, and concerning whose history my new acquaintance, whose name I ascertained was Masey, seemed disposed to be somewhat communicative. His master, it appeared, had come down to this place, partly for the sake of reducing his establishment — not, Mr. Masey was swift to inform me, on economical principles, but because the poor gentleman, for particular reasons, wished to have few dependents about him — partly in order that he might be near his old friend, Dr. Garden, who was established in the neighbourhood, and whose society and advice were necessary to Mr. Strange's life. That life was, it appeared, held by this suffering gentleman on a precarious tenure. It was ebbing away fast with each passing hour. The servant already spoke of his master in the past tense, describing him to me as a

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young gentleman not more than five-and-thirty years of age, with a young face, as far as the features and build of it went, but with an expression which had nothing of youth about it. This was the great peculiarity of the man. At a distance he looked younger than he was by many years, and strangers, at the time when he had been used to get about, always took him for a man of seven or eight-and-twenty, but they changed their minds on getting nearer to him. Old Masey had a way of his own of summing up the peculiarities of his master, repeating twenty times over: "Sir, he was Strange by name, and Strange by nature, and Strange to look at into the bargain."

It was during my second or third interview with the old fellow that he uttered the words quoted at the beginning of this plain narrative.

"Not such a thing as a looking-glass in all the house," the old man said, standing beside my piece of timber, and looking across reflectively at the house opposite. "Not one."

"In the sitting-rooms, I suppose you mean?"

"No, sir, I mean sitting-rooms and bedrooms both; there isn't so much as a shaving-glass as big as the palm of your hand anywhere."

"But how is it?" I asked. "Why are there no looking-glasses in any of the rooms?"

"Ah, sir!" replied Masey, "that's what none of us can ever tell. There is the mystery. It's just a fancy on the part of my master. He had some strange fancies, and this was one of them. A pleasant gentleman he was to live with, as any servant could desire. A liberal gentleman, and one who gave but little trouble; always ready with a kind word, and a kind

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deed, too, for the matter of that. There was not a house in all the parish of St. George's (in which we lived before we came down here) where the servants had more holidays or a better table kept; but, for all that, he had his queer ways and his fancies, as I may call them, and this was one of them. And the point he made of it, sir," the old man went on; "the extent to which that regulation was enforced, whenever a new servant was engaged; and the changes in the establishment it occasioned! In hiring a new servant, the very first stipulation made, was that about the looking-glasses. It was one of my duties to explain the thing, as far as it could be explained, before any servant was taken into the house. 'You'll find it an easy place,' I used to say, 'with a liberal table, good wages, and a deal of leisure; but there's one thing you must make up your mind to; you must do without looking-glasses while you're here, for there isn't one in the house, and, what's more, there never will be.'"

"But how did you know there never would be one?" I asked.

"Lor' bless you, sir! If you'd seen and heard all that I'd seen and heard, you could have no doubt about it. Why, only to take one instance: — I remember a particular day when my master had occasion to go into the housekeeper's room, where the cook lived, to see about some alterations that were making, and when a pretty scene took place. The cook — she was a very ugly woman, and awful vain — had left a little bit of a looking-glass, about six inches square, upon the chimney-piece; she had got it *surreptious*, and kept it always locked up; but she'd left it out, being called away suddenly, while titivating her hair. I had

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seen the glass, and was making for the chimney-piece as fast as I could; but master came in front of it before I could get there, and it was all over in a moment. He gave one long piercing look into it, turned deadly pale, and seizing the glass, dashed it into a hundred pieces on the floor, and then stamped upon the fragments and ground them into powder with his feet. He shut himself up for the rest of that day in his own room, first ordering me to discharge the cook, then and there, at a moment's notice."

"What an extraordinary thing!" I said, pondering.

"Ah, sir," continued the old man, "it was astonishing what trouble I had with those women-servants. It was difficult to get any that would take the place at all under the circumstances. 'What not so much as a mossul to do one's 'air at?' they would say, and they'd go off, in spite of extra wages. Then those who did consent to come, what lies they would tell, to be sure! They would protest that they didn't want to look in the glass, that they never had been in the habit of looking in the glass, and all the while that very wench would have her looking-glass, of some kind or another, hid away among her clothes up-stairs. Sooner or later, she would bring it out too, and leave it about somewhere or other (just like the cook), where it was as likely as not that master might see it. And then — for girls like that have no consciences, sir — when I had caught one of 'em at it, she'd turn round as bold as brass, 'And how am I to know whether my 'air's parted straight?' she'd say, just as if it hadn't been considered in her wages that that was the very thing which she never *was* to know while she lived in our house. A vain lot, sir, and the ugly ones always the

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vainest. There was no end to their dodges. They'd have looking-glasses in the interiors of their workbox-lids, where it was next to impossible that I could find 'em, or inside the covers of hymn-books, or cookery-books, or in their caddies. I recollect one girl, a sly one she was, and marked with the small-pox terrible, who was always reading her prayer-book at odd times. Sometimes I used to think what a religious mind she'd got, and at other times (depending on the mood I was in) I would conclude that it was the marriage-service she was studying; but one day, when I got behind her to satisfy my doubts — lo and behold! it was the old story: a bit of glass, without a frame, fastened into the kiver with the outside edges of the sheets of postage-stamps. Dodges! Why they'd keep their looking-glasses in the scullery or the coal-cellar, or leave them in charge of the servants next door, or with the milk-woman round the corner; but have 'em they would. And I don't mind confessing, sir," said the old man, bringing his long speech to an end, "that it *was* an inconveniency not to have so much as a scrap to shave before. I used to go to the barber's at first, but I soon gave that up, and took to wearing my beard as my master did; likewise to keeping my hair" — Mr. Masey touched his head as he spoke — "so short, that it didn't require any parting, before or behind."

I sat for some time lost in amazement, and staring at my companion. My curiosity was powerfully stimulated, and the desire to learn more was very strong within me.

"Had your master any personal defect," I inquired, "which might have made it distressing to him to see his own image reflected?"

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"By no means, sir," said the old man. "He was as handsome a gentleman as you would wish to see: a little delicate-looking and careworn; perhaps, with a very pale face; but as free from any deformity as you or I, sir. No, sir, no; it was nothing of that."

"Then what was it? What is it?" I asked, desperately. "Is there no one who is, or has been, in your master's confidence?"

"Yes, sir," said the old fellow, with his eyes turning to that window opposite. "There is one person who knows all my master's secrets, and this secret among the rest."

"And who is that?"

The old man turned round and looked at me fixedly. "The doctor here," he said. "Dr. Garden. My master's very old friend."

"I should like to speak with this gentleman," I said, involuntarily.

"He is with my master now," answered Masey. "He will be coming out presently, and I think I may say he will answer any question you may like to put to him." As the old man spoke, the door of the house opened, and a middle-aged gentleman, who was tall and thin, but who lost something of his height by a habit of stooping, appeared on the step. Old Masey left me in a moment. He muttered something about taking the doctor's directions, and hastened across the road. The tall gentleman spoke to him for a minute or two very seriously, probably about the patient upstairs, and it then seemed to me from their gestures that I myself was the subject of some further conversation between them. At all events, when old Masey retired into the house, the doctor came across to where

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I was standing, and addressed me with a very agreeable smile.

"John Masey tells me that you are interested in the case of my poor friend, sir. I am now going back to my house, and if you don't mind the trouble of walking with me, I shall be happy to enlighten you as far as I am able."

I hastened to make my apologies and express my acknowledgments, and we set off together. When we had reached the doctor's house and were seated in his study, I ventured to inquire after the health of this poor gentleman.

"I am afraid there is no amendment, nor any prospect of amendment," said the doctor. "Old Masey has told you something of his strange condition, has he not?"

"Yes, he has told me something," I answered, "and he says you know all about it."

Dr. Garden looked very grave. "I don't know all about it. I only know what happens when he comes into the presence of a looking-glass. But as to the circumstances which have led to his being haunted in the strangest fashion that I ever heard of, I know no more of them than you do."

"Haunted?" I repeated. "And in the strangest fashion that you ever heard of?"

Dr. Garden smiled at my eagerness, seemed to be collecting his thoughts, and presently went on:

"I made the acquaintance of Mr. Oswald Strange in a curious way. It was on board of an Italian steamer, bound from Civita Vecchia to Marseilles. We had been travelling all night. In the morning I was shaving myself in the cabin, when suddenly this man

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came behind me, glanced for a moment into the small mirror before which I was standing, and then, without a word of warning, tore it from the nail, and dashed it to pieces at my feet. His face was at first livid with passion — it seemed to me rather the passion of fear than of anger — but it changed after a moment, and he seemed ashamed of what he had done. Well," continued the doctor, relapsing for a moment into a smile, "of course I was in a devil of a rage. I was operating on my underjaw, and the start the thing gave me caused me to cut myself. Besides, altogether it seemed an outrageous and insolent thing, and I gave it to poor Strange in a style of language which I am sorry to think of now, but which, I hope, was excusable at the time. As to the offender himself, his confusion and regret, now that his passion was at an end, disarmed me. He sent for the steward, and paid most liberally for the damage done to the steam-boat property, explaining to him, and to some other passengers who were present in the cabin, that what had happened had been accidental. For me, however, he had another explanation. Perhaps he felt that I must know it to have been no accident — perhaps he really wished to confide in some one. At all events, he owned to me that what he had done was done under the influence of an uncontrollable impulse — a seizure which took him, he said, at times — something like a fit. He begged my pardon, and entreated that I would endeavour to disassociate him personally from this action, of which he was heartily ashamed. Then he attempted a sickly joke, poor fellow, about his wearing a beard, and feeling a little spiteful, in consequence, when he saw other people taking the trouble to shave;

but he said nothing about any infirmity or delusion, and shortly after left me.

"In my professional capacity I could not help taking some interest in Mr. Strange. I did not altogether lose sight of him after our sea-journey to Marseilles was over. I found him a pleasant companion up to a certain point; but I always felt that there was a reserve about him. He was uncommunicative about his past life, and especially would never allude to anything connected with his travels or his residence in Italy, which, however, I could make out had been a long one. He spoke Italian well, and seemed familiar with the country, but disliked to talk about it.

"During the time we spent together there were seasons when he was so little himself, that I, with a pretty large experience, was almost afraid to be with him. His attacks were violent and sudden in the last degree; and there was one most extraordinary feature connected with them all: — some horrible association of ideas took possession of him whenever he found himself before a looking-glass. And after we had travelled together for a time, I dreaded the sight of a mirror hanging harmlessly against a wall, or a toilet-glass standing on a dressing-table, almost as much as he did.

"Poor Strange was not always affected in the same manner by a looking-glass. Sometimes it seemed to madden him with fury; at other times, it appeared to turn him to stone: remaining motionless and speechless as if attacked by catalepsy. One night — the worst things always happen at night, and oftener than one would think on stormy nights — we arrived at a small town in the central district of Auvergne: a place but

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little known, out of the line of railways, and to which we had been drawn, partly by the antiquarian attractions which the place possessed, and partly by the beauty of the scenery. The weather had been rather against us. The day had been dull and murky, the heat stifling, and the sky had threatened mischief since the morning. At sundown, these threats were fulfilled. The thunderstorm, which had been all day coming up — as it seemed to us, against the wind — burst over the place where we were lodged, with very great violence.

"There are some practical-minded persons with strong constitutions, who deny roundly that their fellow-creatures are, or can be, affected, in mind or body, by atmospheric influences. I am not a disciple of that school, simply because I cannot believe that those changes of weather, which have so much effect upon animals, and even on inanimate objects, can fail to have some influence on a piece of machinery so sensitive and intricate as the human frame. I think, then, that it was in part owing to the disturbed state of the atmosphere that, on this particular evening I felt nervous and depressed. When my new friend Strange and I parted for the night, I felt as little disposed to go to rest as I ever did in my life. The thunder was still lingering among the mountains in the midst of which our inn was placed. Sometimes it seemed nearer, and at other times further off; but it never left off altogether, except for a few minutes at a time. It was quite unable to shake off a succession of painful ideas which persistently besieged my mind.

"It is hardly necessary to add that I thought from time to time of my travelling-companion in the next

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room. His image was almost continually before me. He had been dull and depressed all the evening, and when we parted for the night there was a look in his eyes which I could not get out of my memory.

"There was a door between our rooms, and the partition dividing them was not very solid; and yet I had heard no sound since I parted from him which could indicate that he was there at all, much less that he was awake and stirring. I was in a mood, sir, which made this silence terrible to me, and so many foolish fancies — as that he was lying there dead, or in a fit, or what not — took possession of me, that at last I could bear it no longer. I went to the door, and, after listening, very attentively but quite in vain, for any sound, I at last knocked pretty sharply. There was no answer. Feeling that longer suspense would be unendurable, I, without more ceremony, turned the handle and went in.

"It was a great bare room, and so imperfectly lighted by a single candle that it was almost impossible — except when the lightning flashed — to see into its great dark corners. A small rickety bedstead stood against one of the walls, shrouded by yellow cotton curtains, passed through a great iron ring in the ceiling. There was, for all other furniture, an old chest of drawers which served also as a washing-stand, having a small basin and ewer and a single towel arranged on the top of it. There were, moreover, two ancient chairs and a dressing-table. On this last, stood a large old-fashioned looking-glass with a carved frame.

"I must have seen all these things, because I remember them so well now, but I do not know how I could have seen them, for it seems to me that, from

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the moment of my entering that room, the action of my senses and of the faculties of my mind was held fast by the ghastly figure which stood motionless before the looking-glass in the middle of the empty room.

"How terrible it was! The weak light of one candle standing on the table shone upon Strange's face, lighting it from below, and throwing (as I now remember) his shadow, vast and black, upon the wall behind him and upon the ceiling overhead. He was leaning rather forward, with his hands upon the table supporting him, and gazing into the glass which stood before him with a horrible fixity. The sweat was on his white face; his rigid features and his pale lips showed in that feeble light were horrible, more than words can tell, to look at. He was so completely stupified and lost, that the noise I had made in knocking and in entering the room was unobserved by him. Not even when I called him loudly by name did he move or did his face change.

"What a vision of horror that was, in the great dark empty room, in a silence that was something more than negative, that ghastly figure frozen into stone by some unexplained terror! And the silence and the stillness! The very thunder had ceased now. My heart stood still with fear. Then, moved by some instinctive feeling, under whose influence I acted mechanically, I crept with slow steps nearer and nearer to the table, and at last, half expecting to see some spectre even more horrible than this which I saw already, I looked over his shoulder into the looking-glass. I happened to touch his arm, though only in the lightest manner. In that one moment the spell which had

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held him — who knows how long? — enchained, seemed broken, and he lived in this world again. He turned round upon me, as suddenly as a tiger makes its spring, and seized me by the arm.

"I have told you that even before I entered my friend's room I had felt, all that night, depressed and nervous. The necessity for action at this time was, however, so obvious, and this man's agony made all that I had felt, appear so trifling, that much of my own discomfort seemed to leave me. I felt that I *must* be strong.

"The face before me almost unmanned me. The eyes which looked into mine were so scared with terror, the lips — if I may say so — looked so speechless. The wretched man gazed long into my face, and then, still holding me by the arm, slowly, very slowly, turned his head. I had gently tried to move him away from the looking-glass, but he would not stir, and now he was looking into it as fixedly as ever. I could bear this no longer, and, using such force as was necessary, I drew him gradually away, and got him to one of the chairs at the foot of the bed. 'Come!' I said — after the long silence my voice, even to myself, sounded strange and hollow — 'come! You are over-tired, and you feel the weather. Don't you think you ought to be in bed? Suppose you lie down. Let me try my medical skill in mixing you a composing draught.'

"He held my hand, and looked eagerly into my eyes. 'I am better now,' he said, speaking at last very faintly. Still he looked at me in that wistful way. It seemed as if there were something that he wanted to do or say, but had not sufficient resolution. At length he got up from the chair to which I had led him, and

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beckoning me to follow him, went across the room to the dressing-table, and stood again before the glass. A violent shudder passed through his frame as he looked into it; but apparently forcing himself to go through with what he had now begun, he remained where he was, and, without looking away, moved to me with his hand to come and stand beside him. I complied.

"'Look in there!' he said, in an almost inaudible tone. He was supported, as before, by his hands resting on the table, and could only bow with his head towards the glass to intimate what he meant. 'Look in there!' he repeated.

"I did as he asked me.

"'What do you see?' he asked next.

"'See?' I repeated, trying to speak as cheerfully as I could, and describing the reflexion of his own face as nearly as I could. 'I see a very, very pale face with sunken cheeks —'

"'What?' he cried, with an alarm in his voice which I could not understand.

"'With sunken cheeks,' I went on, 'and two hollow eyes with large pupils.'

"I saw the reflexion of my friend's face change, and felt his hand clutch my arm even more tightly than he had done before. I stopped abruptly and looked round at him. He did not turn his head towards me, but, gazing still into the looking-glass, seemed to labour for utterance.

"'What,' he stammered at last. 'Do — you — see it — too?'

"'See what?' I asked, quickly.

"'That face!' he cried, in accents of horror. 'That

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face — which is not mine — and which — I SEE INSTEAD OF MINE — always!'

"I was struck speechless by the words. In a moment this mystery was explained — but what an explanation! Worse, a hundred times worse, than anything I had imagined. What! Had this man lost the power of seeing his own image as it was reflected there before him? and, in its place, was there the image of another? Had he changed reflexions with some other man? The frightfulness of the thought struck me speechless for a time — then I saw how false an impression my silence was conveying.

"'No, no, no!' I cried, as soon as I could speak — 'a hundred times, no! I see you, of course, and only you. It was your face I attempted to describe, and no other.'

"He seemed not to hear me. 'Why, look there!' he said, in a low, indistinct voice, pointing to his own image in the glass. 'Whose face do you see there?'

"'Why yours, of course.' And then, after a moment, I added, 'Whose do you see?'

"He answered, like one in a trance, '*His* — only his — always his!' He stood still a moment, and then, with a loud and terrific scream, repeated those words, 'ALWAYS HIS, ALWAYS HIS,' and fell down in a fit before me.

"I knew what to do now. Here was a thing which, at any rate, I could understand. I had with me my usual small stock of medicines and surgical instruments, and I did what was necessary: first to restore my unhappy patient, and next to procure for him the rest he needed so much. He was very ill — at death's door

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for some days — and I could not leave him, though there was urgent need that I should be back in London. When he began to mend, I sent over to England for my servant — John Masey — whom I knew I could trust. Acquainting him with the outlines of the case, I left him in charge of my patient, with orders that he should be brought over to this country as soon as he was fit to travel.

"That awful scene was always before me. I saw this devoted man day after day, with the eyes of my imagination, sometimes destroying in his rage the harmless looking-glass, which was the immediate cause of his suffering, sometimes transfixed before the horrid image that turned him to stone. I recollect coming upon him once when we were stopping at a roadside inn, and seeing him stand so by broad daylight. His back was turned towards me, and I waited and watched him for nearly half an hour as he stood there motionless and speechless, and appearing not to breathe. I am not sure but that this apparition seen so by daylight was more ghastly than that apparition seen in the middle of the night, with the thunder rumbling among the hills.

"Back in London in his own house, where he could command in some sort the objects which should surround him, poor Strange was better than he would have been elsewhere. He seldom went out except at night, but once or twice I have walked with him by daylight, and have seen him terribly agitated when we have had to pass a shop in which looking-glasses were exposed for sale.

"It is nearly a year now since my poor friend followed me down to this place, to which I have retired.

For some months he has been daily getting weaker and weaker, and a disease of the lungs has become developed in him, which has brought him to his death-bed. I should add, by-the-by, that John Masey has been his constant companion ever since I brought them together, and I have had, consequently, to look after a new servant.

"And now tell me," the doctor added, bringing his tale to an end, "did you ever hear a more miserable history, or was ever man haunted in a more ghastly manner than this man?"

I was about to reply, when we heard a sound of footsteps outside, and before I could speak old Masey entered the room, in haste and disorder.

"I was just telling this gentleman," the doctor said: not at the moment observing old Masey's changed manner: "how you deserted me to go over to your present master."

"Ah! sir," the man answered, in a troubled voice, "I'm afraid he won't be my master long."

The doctor was on his legs in a moment. "What! Is he worse?"

"I think, sir, he is dying," said the old man.

"Come with me, sir; you may be of use if you can keep quiet." The doctor caught up his hat as he addressed me in those words, and in a few minutes we had reached The Compensation House. A few seconds more and we were standing in a darkened room on the first floor, and I saw lying on a bed before me — pale, emaciated, and, as it seemed, dying — the man whose story I had just heard.

He was lying with closed eyes when we came into the room, and I had leisure to examine his features.

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What a tale of misery they told! They were regular and symmetrical in their arrangement, and not without beauty — the beauty of exceeding refinement and delicacy. Force there was none, and perhaps it was to the want of this that the faults — perhaps the crime — which had made the man's life so miserable were to be attributed. Perhaps the crime? Yes, it was not likely that an affliction, lifelong and terrible, such as this he had endured, would come upon him unless some misdeed had provoked the punishment. What misdeed we were soon to know.

It sometimes — I think generally — happens that the presence of any one who stands and watches beside a sleeping man will wake him, unless his slumbers are unusually heavy. It was so now. While we looked at him, the sleeper awoke very suddenly, and fixed his eyes upon us. He put out his hand and took the doctor's in its feeble grasp. "Who is that?" he asked next, pointing towards me.

"Do you wish him to go? The gentleman knows something of your sufferings, and is powerfully interested in your case; but he will leave us, if you wish it," the doctor said.

"No. Let him stay."

Seating myself out of sight, but where I could both see and hear what passed, waited for what should follow. Dr. Garden and John Masey stood beside the bed. There was a moment's pause.

"I want a looking-glass," said Strange, without a word of preface.

We all started to hear him say those words.

"I am dying," said Strange; "will you not grant me my request?"

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Doctor Garden whispered to old Masey; and the latter left the room. He was not absent long, having gone no further than the next house. He held an oval-framed mirror in his hand when he returned. A shudder passed through the body of the sick man as he saw it.

"Put it down," he said, faintly — "anywhere — for the present."

No one of us spoke. I do not think, in that moment of suspense, that we *could*, any of us, have spoken if we had tried.

The sick man tried to raise himself a little. "Prop me up," he said. "I speak with difficulty — I have something to say."

They put pillows behind him, so as to raise his head and body.

"I have presently a use for it," he said, indicating the mirror. "I want to see —" He stopped, and seemed to change his mind. He was sparing of his words. "I want to tell you — all about it." Again he was silent. Then he seemed to make a great effort and spoke once more, beginning very abruptly.

"I loved my wife fondly. I loved her — her name was Lucy. She was English; but, after we were married, we lived long abroad — in Italy. She liked the country, and I liked what she liked. She liked to draw, too, and I got her a master. He was an Italian. I will not give his name. We always called him 'the Master.' A treacherous insidious man this was, and, under cover of his profession, took advantage of his opportunities, and taught my wife to love him — to love him.

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"I am short of breath. I need not enter into details as to how I found them out; but I *did* find them out. We were away on a sketching expedition when I made my discovery. My rage maddened me, and there was one at hand who fomented my madness. My wife had a maid, who, it seemed, had also loved this man — the Master — and had been ill treated and deserted by him. She told me all. She had played the part of go-between — had carried letters. When she told me these things, it was night, in a solitary Italian town, among the mountains. 'He is in his room now,' she said, 'writing to her.'

"A frenzy took possession of me as I listened to those words. I am naturally vindictive — remember that — and now my longing for revenge was like a thirst. Travelling in those lonely regions, I was armed, and when the woman said, 'He is writing to your wife,' I laid hold of my pistols, as by an instinct. It has been some comfort to me since, that I took them both. Perhaps, at that moment, I may have meant fairly by him — meant that we should fight. I don't know what I meant, quite. The woman's words, 'He is in his own room now, writing to her,' rung in my ears.

The sick man stopped to take breath. It seemed an hour, though it was probably not more than two minutes, before he spoke again.

"I managed to get into his room unobserved. Indeed, he was altogether absorbed in what he was doing. He was sitting at the only table in the room, writing at a travelling-desk, by the light of a single candle. It was a rude dressing-table, and — and before him

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— exactly before him — there was — there was a looking-glass.

"I stole up behind him as he sat and wrote by the light of the candle. I looked over his shoulder at the letter, and I read, 'Dearest Lucy, my love, my darling.' As I read the words, I pulled the trigger of the pistol I held in my right hand, and killed him — killed him — but, before he died, he looked up once — not at me, but at my image before him in the glass, and his face — such a face — has been there — ever since, and mine — my face — is gone!"

He fell back exhausted, and we all pressed forward thinking that he must be dead, he lay so still.

But he had not yet passed away. He revived under the influence of stimulants. He tried to speak, and muttered indistinctly from time to time words of which we could sometimes make no sense. We understood, however, that he had been tried by an Italian tribunal, and had been found guilty; but with such extenuating circumstances that his sentence was commuted to imprisonment, during, we thought we made out, two years. But we could not understand what he said about his wife, though we gathered that she was still alive, from something he whispered to the doctor of there being provision made for her in his will.

He lay in a doze for something more than an hour after he had told his tale, and then he woke up quite suddenly, as he had done when we had first entered the room. He looked round uneasily in all directions, until his eye fell on the looking-glass.

"I want it," he said, hastily; but I noticed that he did not shudder now, as it was brought near. When

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old Masey approached, holding it in his hand, and crying like a child, Dr. Garden came forward and stood between him and his master, taking the hand of poor Strange in his.

"Is this wise?" he asked. "Is it good, do you, think, to revive this misery of your life now, when it is so near its close? The chastisement of your crime," he added, solemnly, "has been a terrible one. Let us hope in God's mercy that your punishment is over."

The dying man raised himself with a last great effort, and looked up at the doctor with such an expression on his face as none of us had seen on any face, before.

"I do hope so," he said, faintly, "but you must let me have my way in this — for if, now, when I look, I see aright — once more — I shall then hope yet more strongly — for I shall take it as a sign."

The doctor stood aside without another word, when he heard the dying man speak thus, and the old servant drew near, and, stooping over softly, held the looking-glass before his master. Presently afterwards, we, who stood around looking breathlessly at him, saw such a rapture upon his face, as left no doubt upon our minds that the face which had haunted him so long, had, in his last hour, disappeared.

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No. 4 BRANCH LINE.
THE TRAVELLING POST-OFFICE.

Many years ago, and before this Line was so much as projected, I was engaged as a clerk in a Travelling Post-office running along the Line of railway from London to a town in the Midland Counties, which we will call Fazeley. My duties were to accompany the mail-train which left Fazeley at 8.15 P.M. and arrived in London about midnight, and to return by the day mail leaving London at 10.30 the following morning, after which I had an unbroken night at Fazeley, while another clerk discharged the same round of work; and in this way each alternate evening I was on duty in the railway post-office van. At first I suffered a little from a hurry and tremor of nerve in pursuing my occupation while the train was crashing along under bridges and through tunnels at a speed which was then thought marvellous and perilous; but it was not long before my hands and eyes became accustomed to the motion of the carriage, and I could go through my business with the same despatch and ease as in the post-office of the country town where I had learned it, and from which I had been promoted by the influence of the surveyor of the district, Mr. Huntingdon. In fact, the work soon fell into a monotonous routine, which, night after night, was pursued in an unbroken course by myself and the junior clerk, who was my only assistant: the railway post-office work not having then attained the importance and magnitude it now possesses.

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Our route lay through an agricultural district containing many small towns, which made up two or three bags only; one for London; another perhaps for the county town; a third for the railway post-office, to be opened by us, and the enclosures to be distributed according to their various addresses. The clerks in many of these small offices were women, as is very generally the case still, being the daughters and female relatives of the nominal postmaster, who transact most of the business of the office, and whose names are most frequently signed upon the bills accompanying the bags. I was a young man, and somewhat more curious in feminine handwriting than I am now. There was one family in particular, whom I had never seen, but with whose signatures I was perfectly familiar — clear, delicate, and educated, very unlike the miserable scrawl upon other letter-bills. One New Year's-eve, in a moment of sentiment, I tied a slip of paper among a bundle of letters for their office, upon which I had written, "A happy New Year to you all." The next evening brought me a return of my good wishes, signed, as I guessed, by three sisters of the name of Clifton. From that day, every now and then, a sentence or two as brief as the one above passed between us, and the feeling of acquaintance and friendship grew upon me, though I had never yet had an opportunity of seeing my fair unknown friends.

It was towards the close of the following October that it came under my notice that the then Premier of the ministry was paying an autumn visit to a nobleman, whose country seat was situated near a small village on our line of rail. The Premier's despatch-box, containing, of course, all the despatches which it was ne-

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cessary to send down to him, passed between him and the Secretary of State, and was, as usual, entrusted to the care of the post-office. The Continent was just then in a more than ordinarily critical state; we were thought to be upon the verge of an European war; and there were murmurs floating about, at the dispersion of the ministry up and down the country. These circumstances made the charge of the despatch-box the more interesting to me. It was very similar in size and shape to the old-fashioned workboxes used by ladies before boxes of polished and ornamental wood came into vogue, and, like them, it was covered with red morocco leather, and it fastened with a lock and key. The first time it came into my hands I took such special notice of it as might be expected. Upon one corner of the lid I detected a peculiar device scratched slightly upon it, most probably with the sharp point of a steel pen, in such a moment of preoccupation of mind as causes most of us to draw odd lines and caricatured faces upon any piece of paper which may lie under our hand. It was the old revolutionary device of a heart with a dagger piercing it; and I wondered whether it could be the Premier, or one of his secretaries, who had traced it upon the morocco.

This box had been travelling up and down for about ten days, and, as the village did not make up a bag for London, there being very few letters excepting those from the great house, the letter-bag from the house, and the despatch-box, were handed direct into our travelling post-office. But in compliment to the presence of the Premier in the neighbourhood, the train, instead of slackening speed only, stopped altogether, in order that the Premier's trusty and confiden-

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tial messenger might deliver the important box into my own hands, that its perfect safety might be ensured. I had an undefined suspicion that some person was also employed to accompany the train up to London, for three or four times I had met with a foreign-looking gentleman at Euston-square, standing at the door of the carriage nearest the post-office van, and eyeing the heavy bags as they were transferred from my care to the custody of the officials from the General Post-office. But though I felt amused and somewhat nettled at this needless precaution, I took no further notice of the man, except to observe that he had the swarthy aspect of a foreigner, and that he kept his face well away from the light of the lamps. Except for these things, and after the first time or two, the Premier's despatch-box interested me no more than any other part of my charge. My work had been doubly monotonous for some time past, and I began to think it time to get up some little entertainment with my unknown friends, the Cliftons. I was just thinking of it as the train stopped at the station about a mile from the town where they lived, and their postman, a gruff matter-of-fact fellow — you could see it in every line of his face — put in the letter-bags, and with them a letter addressed to me. It was in an official envelope, "On Her Majesty's Service," and the seal was an official seal. On the folded paper inside it (folded officially also) I read the following order: "Mr. Wilcox is requested to permit the bearer, the daughter of the postmaster at Eaton, to see the working of the railway post-office during the up-journey." The writing I knew well as being that of one of the surveyor's clerks, and the signature was Mr. Huntingdon's. The bearer

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of the order presented herself at the door, the snorting of the engine gave notice of the instant departure of the train, I held out my hand, the young lady sprang lightly and deftly into the van, and we were off again on our midnight journey.

She was a small slight creature, one of those slender little girls one never thinks of as being a woman, dressed neatly and plainly in a dark dress, with a veil hanging a little over her face and tied under her chin: the most noticeable thing about her appearance being a great mass of light hair, almost yellow, which had got loose in some way, and fell down her neck in thick wavy tresses. She had a free pleasant way about her, not in the least bold or forward, which in a minute or two made her presence seem the most natural thing in the world. As she stood beside me before the row of boxes into which I was sorting my letters, she asked questions and I answered as if it were quite an every-day occurrence for us to be travelling up together in the night mail to Euston-square station. I blamed myself for an idiot that I had not sooner made an opportunity for visiting my unknown friends at Eaton.

"Then," I said, putting down the letter-bill from their own office before her, "may I ask which of the signatures I know so well, is yours? Is it A. Clifton, or M. Clifton, or S. Clifton?" She hesitated a little, and blushed, and lifted up her frank childlike eyes to mine.

"I am A Clifton," she answered.

"And your name?" I said.

"Anne;" then, as if anxious to give some explanation to me of her present position, she added, "I was going up to London on a visit, and I thought it would be so nice to travel in the post-office to see how

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the work was done, and Mr. Huntingdon came to survey our office, and he said he would send me an order."

I felt somewhat surprised, for a stricter martinet than Mr. Huntingdon did not breathe; but I glanced down at the small innocent face at my side, and cordially approved of his departure from ordinary rules.

"Did you know you would travel with me?" I asked, in a lower voice; for Tom Morville, my junior, was at my other elbow.

"I knew I should travel with Mr. Wilcox," she answered, with a smile that made all my nerves tingle.

"You have not written me a word for ages," said I, reproachfully.

"You had better not talk, or you'll be making mistakes," she replied, in an arch tone. It was quite true; for, a sudden confusion coming over me, I was sorting the letters at random.

We were just then approaching the small station where the letter-bag from the great house was taken up. The engine was slackening speed. Miss Clifton manifested some natural and becoming diffidence.

"It would look so odd," she said, "to any one on the platform, to see a girl in the post-office van! And they couldn't know I was a postmaster's daughter, and had an order from Mr. Huntingdon. Is there no dark corner to shelter me?"

I must explain to you in a word or two the construction of the van, which was much less efficiently fitted up than the travelling post-offices of the present day. It was a reversible van, with a door at each right-hand corner. At each door the letter-boxes were so arranged as to form a kind of screen about two feet in

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width, which prevented people from seeing all over the carriage at once. Thus the door at the far end of the van, the one not in use at the time, was thrown into deep shadow, and the screen before it turned it into a small niche, where a slight little person like Miss Clifton was very well concealed from curious eyes. Before the train came within the light from the lamps on the platform, she ensconced herself in this shelter. No one but I could see her laughing face, as she stood there leaning cautiously forward with her finger pressed upon her rosy lips, peeping at the messenger who delivered into my own hands the Premier's despatch-box, while Tom Morville received the letter-bag of the great house.

"See," I said, when we were again in motion, and she had emerged from her concealment, "this is the Premier's despatch-box, going back to the Secretary of State. There are some state secrets for you, and ladies are fond of secrets."

"O! I know nothing about politics," she answered, indifferently, "and we have had that box through our office a time or two."

"Did you ever notice this mark upon it," I asked — "a heart with a dagger through it?" and bending down my face to hers, I added a certain spooney remark, which I do not care to repeat. Miss Clifton tossed her little head, and pouted her lips; but she took the box out of my hands, and carried it to the lamp nearest the further end of the van, after which she put it down upon the counter close beside the screen, and I thought no more about it. The midnight ride was entertaining in the extreme, for the girl was full of young life and sauciness and merry humour. I can

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safely aver that I have never been to an evening's so-called entertainment which, to me, was half so enjoyable. It added also to the zest and keen edge of the enjoyment to see her hasten to hide herself whenever I told her we were going to stop to take up the mails.

We had passed Watford, the last station at which we stopped, before I became alive to the recollection that our work was terribly behindhand. Miss Clifton also became grave, and sat at the end of the counter very quiet and subdued, as if her frolic were over, and it was possible she might find something to repent of in it. I had told her we should stop no more until we reached Euston-square station, but to my surprise I felt our speed decreasing, and our train coming to a standstill. I looked out and called to the guard in the van behind, who told me he supposed there was something on the line before us, and that we should go on in a minute or two. I turned my head, and gave this information to my fellow-clerk and Miss Clifton.

"Do you know where we are?" she asked, in a frightened tone.

"At Camden-town," I replied. She sprang hastily from her seat, and came towards me.

"I am close to my friend's house here," she said, "so it is a lucky thing for me. It is not five minutes' walk from the station. I will say good-bye to you now, Mr. Wilcox, and I thank you a thousand times for your kindness."

She seemed flurried, and she held out both her little hands to me in an appealing kind of way, as if she were afraid of my detaining her against her will. I took them both into mine, pressing them with rather more ardour than was quite necessary.

"I do not like you to go alone at this hour," I said, "but there is no help for it. It has been a delightful time to me. Will you allow me to call upon you to-morrow morning early, for I leave London at 10.30; or on Wednesday, when I shall be in town again?"

"O," she answered, hanging her head, "I don't know. I'll write and tell mamma how kind you have been, and, and — but I must go, Mr. Wilcox."

"I don't like your going alone," I repeated.

"O! I know the way perfectly," she said, in the same flurried manner, "perfectly, thank you. And it is close at hand. Good-bye!"

She jumped lightly out of the carriage, and the train started on again at the same instant. We were busy enough, as you may suppose. In five minutes more we should be in Euston-square, and there was nearly fifteen minutes' work still to be done. Spite of the enjoyment he had afforded me, I mentally anathematised Mr. Huntingdon and his departure from ordinary rules, and, thrusting Miss Clifton forcibly out of my thoughts, I set to work with a will, gathered up the registered letters for London, tied them into a bundle with the paper bill, and then turned to the corner of the counter for the despatch-box.

You have guessed already my cursed misfortune. The Premier's despatch-box was not there. For the first minute or so I was in nowise alarmed, and merely looked round, upon the floor, under the bags, into the boxes, into any place into which it could have fallen or been deposited. We reached Euston-square while I was still searching, and losing more and more of my composure every instant. Tom Morville joined me in

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my quest, and felt every bag which had been made up and sealed. The box was no small article which could go into little compass; it was certainly twelve inches long, and more than that in girth. But it turned up nowhere. I never felt nearer fainting than at that moment.

"Could Miss Clifton have carried it off?" suggested Tom Morville.

"No," I said, indignantly but thoughtfully, "she couldn't have carried off such a bulky thing as that, without our seeing it. It would not go into one of our pockets, Tom, and she wore a tight-fitting jacket that would not conceal anything."

"No, she can't have it," assented Tom; "then it must be somewhere about." We searched again and again, turning over everything in the van, but without success. The Premier's despatch-box was gone; and all we could do at first was to stand and stare at one another. Our trance of blank dismay was of short duration, for the van was assailed by the postmen from St. Martin's-le-Grand, who were waiting for our charge. In a stupor of bewilderment we completed our work, and delivered up the mails; then, once more we confronted one another with pale faces, frightened out of our seven senses. All the scrapes we had ever been in (and we had had our usual share of errors and blunders) faded into utter insignificance compared with this. My eye fell upon Mr. Huntingdon's order lying among some scraps of waste paper on the floor, and I picked it up, and put it carefully, with its official envelope, into my pocket.

"We can't stay here," said Tom. The porters were

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looking in inquisitively; we were seldom so long in quitting our empty van.

"No," I replied, a sudden gleam of sense darting across the blank bewilderment of my brain; "no, we must go to head-quarters at once, and make a clean breast of it. This is no private business, Tom."

We made one more ineffectual search, and then we hailed a cab and drove as hard as we could to the General Post-office. The secretary of the Post-office was not there, of course, but we obtained the address of his residence in one of the suburbs, four or five miles from the City, and we told no one of our misfortune, my idea being that the fewer who were made acquainted with the loss the better. My judgment was in the right there.

We had to knock up the household of the secretary — a formidable personage with whom I had never been brought into contact before — and in a short time we were holding a strictly private and confidential interview with him, by the glimmer of a solitary candle, just serving to light up his severe face, which changed its expression several times as I narrated the calamity. It was too stupendous for rebuke, and I fancied his eyes softened with something like commiseration as he gazed upon us. After a short interval of deliberation, he announced his intention of accompanying us to the residence of the Secretary of State; and in a few minutes we were driving back again to the opposite extremity of London. It was not far off the hour for the morning delivery of letters when we reached our destination; but the atmosphere was yellow with fog, and we could see nothing as we passed along in almost utter silence, for neither of us ventured to speak, and the secretary

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only made a brief remark now and then. We drove up to some dwelling enveloped in fog, and we were left in the cab for nearly half an hour, while our secretary went in. At the end of that time we were summoned to an apartment where there was seated at a large desk a small spare man, with a great head, and eyes deeply sunk under the brows. There was no form of introduction, of course, and we could only guess who he might be; but we were requested to repeat our statement, and a few shrewd questions were put to us by the stranger. We were eager to put him in possession of everything we knew, but that was little beyond the fact that the despatch-box was lost.

"That young person must have taken it," he said.

"She could not, sir," I answered, positively, but deferentially. "She wore the tightest-fitting pelisse I ever saw, and she gave me both her hands when she said good-bye. She could not possibly have it concealed about her. It would not go into my pocket."

"How did she come to travel up with you in the van, sir?" he asked, severely.

I gave him for answer the order signed by Mr. Huntingdon. He and our secretary scanned it closely.

"It is Huntingdon's signature without doubt," said the latter; "I could swear to it anywhere. This is an extraordinary circumstance!"

It was an extraordinary circumstance. The two retired into an adjoining room, where they stayed for another half-hour, and when they returned to us their faces still bore an aspect of grave perplexity.

"Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Morville," said our secretary, "it is expedient that this affair should be kept inviolably secret. You must even be careful not to hint

that you hold any secret. You did well not to announce your loss at the Post-office, and I shall cause it to be understood that you had instructions to take the despatch-box direct to its destination. Your business now is to find the young woman, and return with her not later than six o'clock this afternoon to my office at the General Post-office. What other steps we think it requisite to take, you need know nothing about; the less you know, the better for yourselves."

Another gleam of commiseration in his official eye made our hearts sink within us. We departed promptly, and, with that instinct of wisdom which at times dictates infallibly what course we should pursue, we decided our line of action. Tom Morville was to go down to Camden-town, and inquire at every house for Miss Clifton, while I — there would be just time for it — was to run down to Eaton by train and obtain her exact address from her parents. We agreed to meet at the General Post-office at half-past five, if I could possibly reach it by that time; but in any case Tom was to report himself to the secretary, and account for my absence.

When I arrived at the station at Eaton, I found that I had only forty-five minutes before the up train went by. The town was nearly a mile away, but I made all the haste I could to reach it. I was not surprised to find the post-office in connexion with a bookseller's shop, and I saw a pleasant elderly lady seated behind the counter, while a tall dark-haired girl was sitting at some work a little out of sight. I introduced myself at once.

"I am Frank Wilcox, of the railway post-office,

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and I have just run down to Eaton to obtain some information from you."

"Certainly. We know you well by name," was the reply, given in a cordial manner, which was particularly pleasant to me.

"Will you be so good as give me the address of Miss Anne Clifton in Camden-town?" I said.

"Miss Anne Clifton?" ejaculated the lady.

"Yes. Your daughter, I presume. Who went up to London last night."

"I have no daughter Anne," she said; "I am Anne Clifton, and my daughters are named Mary and Susan. This is my daughter Mary."

The tall dark-haired girl had left her seat, and now stood beside her mother. Certainly she was very unlike the small golden-haired coquette who had travelled up to London with me as Anne Clifton.

"Madam," I said, scarcely able to speak, "is your other daughter a slender little creature, exactly the reverse of this young lady?"

"No," she answered, laughing; "Susan is both taller and darker than Mary. Call Susan, my dear."

In a few seconds Miss Susan made her appearance, and I had the three before me — A. Clifton, S. Clifton, and M. Clifton. There was no other girl in the family; and when I described the young lady who had travelled under their name, they could not think of any one in the town — it was a small one — who answered my description, or who had gone on a visit to London. I had no time to spare, and I hurried back to the station, just catching the train as it left the platform. At the appointed hour I met Morville at the General Post-office, and threading the long passages of the secretary's offices,

we at length found ourselves anxiously waiting in an ante-room, until we were called into his presence. Morville had discovered nothing, except that the porters and policemen at Camden-town station had seen a young lady pass out last night, attended by a swarthy man who looked like a foreigner, and carried a small black portmanteau.

I scarcely know how long we waited; it might have been years, for I was conscious of an ever-increasing difficulty in commanding my thoughts, or fixing them upon the subject which had engrossed them all day. I had not tasted food for twenty-four hours, nor closed my eyes for thirty-six, while, during the whole of the time, my nervous system had been on full strain.

Presently, the summons came, and I was ushered, first, into the inner apartment. There sat five gentlemen round a table, which was strewed with a number of documents. There were the Secretary of State, whom we had seen in the morning, our secretary, and Mr. Huntingdon; the fourth was a fine-looking man, whom I afterwards knew to be the Premier; the fifth I recognised as our great chief, the Postmaster-General. It was an august assemblage to me, and I bowed low; but my head was dizzy, and my throat parched.

"Mr. Wilcox," said our secretary, "you will tell these gentlemen again, the circumstances of the loss you reported to me this morning."

I laid my hand upon the back of a chair to steady myself, and went through the narration for the third time, passing over sundry remarks made by myself to the young lady. That done, I added the account of my expedition to Eaton, and the certainty at which I had arrived that my fellow-traveller was not the person

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she represented herself to be. After which, I inquired with indescribable anxiety if Mr. Huntingdon's order were a forgery?

"I cannot tell, Mr. Wilcox," said that gentleman, taking the order into his hands, and regarding it with an air of extreme perplexity. "I could have sworn it was mine, had it been attached to any other document. I think Forbes's handwriting is not so well imitated. But it is the very ink I use, and mine is a peculiar signature."

It was a very peculiar and old-fashioned signature, with a flourish underneath it not unlike a whip-handle, with the lash caught round it in the middle; but that did not make it the more difficult to forge, as I humbly suggested. Mr. Huntingdon wrote his name upon a paper, and two or three of the gentlemen tried to imitate the flourish, but vainly. They gave it up with a smile upon their grave faces.

"You have been careful not to let a hint of this matter drop from you, Mr. Wilcox?" said the Postmaster-General.

"Not a syllable, my lord," I answered.

"It is imperatively necessary that the secret should be kept. You would be removed from the temptation of telling it, if you had an appointment in some office abroad. The packet-agency at Alexandria is vacant, and I will have you appointed to it at once."

It would be a good advance from my present situation, and would doubtless prove a stepping-stone to other and better appointments; but I had a mother living at Fazeley, bedridden and paralytic, who had no pleasure in existence except having me to dwell under the same roof with her. My head was growing

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more and more dizzy, and a strange vagueness was creeping over me.

"Gentlemen," I muttered, "I have a bedridden mother whom I cannot leave. I was not to blame, gentlemen." I fancied there was a stir and movement at the table, but my eyes were dim, and in another second I had lost consciousness.

When I came to myself, in two or three minutes, I found that Mr. Huntingdon was kneeling on the floor beside me, supporting my head, while our secretary held a glass of wine to my lips. I rallied as quickly as possible, and staggered to my feet; but the two gentlemen placed me in the chair against which I had been leaning, and insisted upon my finishing the wine before I tried to speak.

"I have not tasted food all day," I said, faintly.

"Then, my good fellow, you shall go home immediately," said the Postmaster-General; "but be on your guard! Not a word of this must escape you. Are you a married man?"

"No, my lord," I answered.

"So much the better," he added, smiling. "You can keep a secret from your mother, I dare say. We rely upon your honour."

The secretary then rang a bell, and I was committed to the charge of the messenger who answered it; and in a few minutes I was being conveyed in a cab to my London lodgings. A week afterwards, Tom Morville was sent out to a post-office in Canada, where he settled down, married, and is still living, perfectly satisfied with his position, as he occasionally informs me by letter. For myself, I remained as I desired, in my old post as travelling-clerk until the death of my

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mother, which occurred some ten or twelve months afterwards. I was then promoted to an appointment as a clerk in charge, upon the first vacancy.

The business of the clerks in charge is to take possession of any post-office in the kingdom, upon the death or resignation of the postmaster, or when circumstances of suspicion cause his suspension from office. My new duties carried me three or four times into Mr. Huntingdon's district. Though that gentleman and I never exchanged a word with regard to the mysterious loss in which we had both had an innocent share, he distinguished me with peculiar favour, and more than once invited me to visit him at his own house. He lived alone, having but one daughter, who had married, somewhat against his will, one of his clerks: the Mr. Forbes whose handwriting had been so successfully imitated in the official order presented to me by the self-styled Miss Anne Clifton. (By the way, I may here mention, though it has nothing to do with my story, that my acquaintance with the Cliftons had ripened into an intimacy, which resulted in my engagement and marriage to Mary.)

It would be beside my purpose to specify the precise number of years which elapsed before I was once again summoned to the secretary's private apartment, where I found him closeted with Mr. Huntingdon. Mr. Huntingdon shook hands with unofficial cordiality; and then the secretary proceeded to state the business on hand.

"Mr. Wilcox, you remember our offer to place you in office in Alexandria?" he said.

"Certainly, sir," I answered.

"It has been a troublesome office," he continued,

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almost pettishly. "We sent out Mr. Forbes only six months ago, on account of his health, which required a warmer climate, and now his medical man reports that his life is not worth three weeks' purchase."

Upon Mr. Huntingdon's face there rested an expression of profound anxiety; and as the secretary paused he addressed himself to me.

"Mr. Wilcox," he said, "I have been soliciting, as a personal favour, that you should be sent out to take charge of the packet agency, in order that my daughter may have some one at hand to befriend her, and manage her business affairs for her. You are not personally acquainted with her, but I know I can trust her with you."

"You may, Mr. Huntingdon," I said, warmly. "I will do anything I can to aid Mrs. Forbes. When do you wish me to start?"

"How soon can you be ready?" was the rejoinder.

"To-morrow morning."

I was not married then, and I anticipated no delay in setting off. Nor was there any. I travelled with the overland mail through France to Marseilles, embarked in a vessel for Alexandria, and in a few days from the time I first heard of my destination set foot in the office there. All the postal arrangements had fallen into considerable irregularity and confusion; for, as I was informed immediately on my arrival, Mr. Forbes had been in a dying condition for the last week, and of course the absence of a master had borne the usual results. I took formal possession of the office, and then, conducted by one of the clerks, I proceeded to the dwelling of the unfortunate postmaster and his no less unfortunate wife. It would be out of

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place in this narrative to indulge in any traveller's tales about the strange place where I was so unexpectedly located. Suffice it to say, that the darkened sultry room into which I was shown, on inquiring for Mrs. Forbes, was bare of furniture, and destitute of all those little tokens of refinement and taste which make our English parlours so pleasant to the eye. There was, however, a piano in one of the dark corners of the room, open, and with a sheet of music on it. While I waited for Mrs. Forbes's appearance, I strolled idly up to the piano to see what music it might be. The next moment my eye fell upon an antique red morocco workbox standing on the top of the piano — a work-box evidently, for the lid was not closely shut, and a few threads of silk and cotton were hanging out of it. In a kind of dream — for it was difficult to believe that the occurrence was a fact — I carried the box to the darkened window, and there, plain in my sight, was the device scratched upon the leather: the revolutionary symbol of a heart with a dagger through it. I had found the Premier's despatch-box in the parlour of the packet-agent of Alexandria!

I stood for some minutes with that dreamlike feeling upon me, gazing at the box in the dim obscure light. It could *not* be real! My fancy must be playing a trick upon me! But the sound of a light step — for, light as it was, I heard it distinctly as it approached the room — broke my trance, and I hastened to replace the box on the piano, and to stoop down as if examining the music before the door opened. I had not sent in my name to Mrs. Forbes, for I did not suppose that she was acquainted with it, nor could she see me distinctly, as I stood in the gloom. But I could

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see her. She had the slight slender figure, the child-like face, and the fair hair of Miss Anne Clifton. She came quickly across the room, holding out both her hands in a childish appealing manner.

"O!" she wailed, in a tone that went straight to my heart, "he is dead! He has just died!"

It was no time then to speak about the red morocco workbox. This little childish creature, who did not look a day older than when I had last seen her in my travelling post-office, was a widow in a strange land, far away from any friend save myself. I had brought her a letter from her father. The first duties that devolved upon me were those of her husband's interment, which had to take place immediately. Three or four weeks elapsed before I could, with any humanity, enter upon the investigation of her mysterious complicity in the daring theft practised on the government and the post-office.

I did not see the despatch-box again. In the midst of her new and vehement grief, Mrs. Forbes had the precaution to remove it before I was ushered again into the room where I had discovered it. I was at some trouble to hit upon any plan by which to gain a second sight of it; but I was resolved that Mrs. Forbes should not leave Alexandria without giving me a full explanation. We were waiting for remittances and instructions from England, and in the mean time the violence of her grief abated, and she recovered a good share of her old buoyancy and loveliness, which had so delighted me on my first acquaintance with her. As her demands upon my sympathy weakened, my curiosity grew stronger, and at last mastered me. I carried with me a netted purse which required mending,

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and I asked her to catch up the broken meshes while I waited for it.

"I will tell your maid to bring your workbox," I said, going to the door and calling the servant. "Your mistress has a red morocco workbox," I said to her, as she answered my summons.

"Yes, sir," she replied.

"Where is it?"

"In her bedroom," she said.

"Mrs. Forbes wishes it brought here." I turned back into the room. Mrs. Forbes had gone deadly pale, but her eyes looked sullen, and her teeth were clenched under her lips with an expression of stubbornness. The maid brought the workbox. I walked, with it in my hands, up to the sofa where she was seated.

"You remember this mark?" I asked; "I think neither of us can ever forget it."

She did not answer by word, but there was a very intelligent gleam in her blue eyes.

"Now," I continued, softly, "I promised your father to befriend you, and I am not a man to forget a promise. But you must tell me the whole simple truth."

I was compelled to reason with her, and to urge her for some time. I confess I went so far as to remind her that there was an English consul at Alexandria, to whom I could resort. At last she opened her stubborn lips, and the whole story came out, mingled with sobs and showers of tears.

She had been in love with Alfred, she said, and they were too poor to marry, and papa would not hear of such a thing. She was always in want of money, she was kept so short; and they promised to give her

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such a great sum — a vast sum — five hundred pounds.

"But who bribed you?" I inquired.

A foreign gentleman whom she had met in London, called Monsieur Bonnard. It was a French name, but she was not sure that he was a Frenchman. He talked to her about her father being a surveyor in the post-office, and asked her a great number of questions. A few weeks after, she met him in their own town by accident, she and Mr. Forbes; and Alfred had a long private talk with him, and they came to her, and told her she could help them very much. They asked her if she could be brave enough to carry off a little red box out of the travelling post-office, containing nothing but papers. After a while she consented. When she had confessed so much under compulsion, Mrs. Forbes seemed to take a pleasure in the narrative, and went on fluently.

"We required papa's signature to the order, and we did not know how to get it. Luckily he had a fit of the gout, and was very peevish; and I had to read over a lot of official papers to him, and then he signed them. One of the papers I read twice, and slipped the order into its place after the second reading. I thought I should have died with fright; but just then he was in great pain, and glad to get his work over. I made an excuse that I was going to visit my aunt at Beckby, but instead of going there direct, we contrived to be at the station at Eaton a minute or two before the mail train came up. I kept outside the station door till we heard the whistle, and just then the postman came running down the road, and I followed him straight through the booking-office, and asked him

to give you the order, which I put into his hand. He scarcely saw me. I just caught a glimpse of Monsieur Bonnard's face through the window of the compartment next the van, when Alfred had gone. They had promised me that the train should stop at Camden-town, if I could only keep your attention engaged until then. You know how I succeeded."

"But how did you dispose of the box?" I asked. "You could not have concealed it about you; that I am sure of."

"Ah!" she said, "nothing was easier. Monsieur Bonnard had described the van to me, and you remember I put the box down at the end of the counter, close to the corner where I hid myself at every station. There was a door with a window in it, and I asked if I might have the window open, as the van was too warm for me. I believe Monsieur Bonnard could have taken it from me by only leaning through his window, but he preferred stepping out, and taking it from my hand, just as the train was leaving Watford — on the far side of the carriages, you understand. It was the last station, and the train came to a stand at Camden-town. After all, the box was not out of your sight more than twenty minutes before you missed it. Monsieur Bonnard and I hurried out of the station, and Alfred followed us. The box was forced open — the lock has never been mended, for it was a peculiar one — and Monsieur Bonnard took possession of the papers. He left the box with me, after putting inside it a roll of notes. Alfred and I were married next morning, and I went back to my aunt's; but we did not tell papa of our marriage for three or four months. That is the story of my red morocco workbox."

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She smiled with the provoking mirthfulness of a mischievous child. There was one point still, on which my curiosity was unsatisfied.

"Did you know what the despatches were about?" I asked.

"O no!" she answered; "I never understood politics in the least. I knew nothing about them. Monsieur did not say a word; he did not even look at the papers while we were by. I would never, never, have taken a registered letter, or anything with money in it, you know. But all those papers could be written again quite easily. You must not think me a thief, Mr. Wilcox; there was nothing worth money among the papers."

"They were worth five hundred pounds to you," I said. "Did you ever see Bonnard again?"

"Never again," she replied. "He said he was going to return to his native country. I don't think Bonnard was his real name."

Most likely not, I thought; but I said no more to Mrs. Forbes. Once again I was involved in a great perplexity about this affair. It was clearly my duty to report the discovery at head-quarters, but I shrank from doing so. One of the chief culprits was already gone to another judgment than that of man; several years had obliterated all traces of Monsieur Bonnard; and the only victim of justice would be this poor little dupe of the two greater criminals. At last I came to the conclusion to send the whole of the particulars to Mr. Huntingdon himself; and I wrote them to him, without remark or comment.

The answer that came to Mrs. Forbes and me in Alexandria was the announcement of Mr. Huntingdon's

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sudden death of some disease of the heart, on the day which I calculated would put him in possession of my communication. Mrs. Forbes was again overwhelmed with apparently heartrending sorrow and remorse. The income left to her was something less than one hundred pounds a year. The secretary of the post-office, who had been a personal friend of the deceased gentleman, was his sole executor; and I received a letter from him, containing one for Mrs. Forbes, which recommended her, in terms not to be misunderstood, to fix upon some residence abroad, and not to return to England. She fancied she would like the seclusion and quiet of a convent; and I made arrangements for her to enter one in Malta, where she would still be under British protection. I left Alexandria myself on the arrival of another packet-agent; and on my return to London I had a private interview with the secretary. I found that there was no need to inform him of the circumstances I have related to you, as he had taken possession of all Mr. Huntingdon's papers. In consideration of his ancient friendship, and of the escape of those who most merited punishment, he had come to the conclusion that it was quite as well to let bygones be bygones.

At the conclusion of the interview I delivered a message which Mrs. Forbes had emphatically entrusted to me.

"Mrs. Forbes wished me to impress upon your mind," I said, "that neither she nor Mr. Forbes would have been guilty of this misdemeanour if they had not been very much in love with one another, and very much in want of money."

"Ah!" replied the secretary, with a smile, "if

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Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the fate of the world would have been different!"

No. 5 BRANCH LINE.
THE ENGINEER.

His name, sir, was Matthew Price; mine is Benjamin Hardy. We were born within a few days of each other; bred up in the same village; taught at the same school. I cannot remember the time when we were not close friends. Even as boys, we never knew what it was to quarrel. We had not a thought, we had not a possession that was not in common. We would have stood by each other, fearlessly, to the death. It was such a friendship as one reads about sometimes in books: fast and firm as the great Tors upon our native moorlands, true as the sun in the heavens.

The name of our village was Chadleigh. Lifted high above the pasture flats which stretched away at our feet like a measureless green lake and melted into mist on the furthest horizon, it nestled, a tiny stone-built hamlet, in a sheltered hollow about midway between the plain and the plateau. Above us, rising ridge beyond ridge, slope beyond slope, spread the mountainous moor-country, bare and bleak for the most part, with here and there a patch of cultivated field or hardy plantation, and crowned highest of all with masses of huge grey crag, abrupt, isolated, hoary, and older than the deluge. These were the Tors — Druids' Tor, King's Tor, Castle Tor, and the like; sacred places, as I have heard, in the ancient time, where crownings, burnings, human sacrifices, and all kinds of

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bloody heathen rites were performed. Bones, too, had been found there, and arrow-heads, and ornaments of gold and glass. I had a vague awe of the Tors in those boyish days, and would not have gone near them after dark for the heaviest bribe.

I have said that we were born in the same village. He was the son of a small farmer, named William Price, and the eldest of a family of seven; I was the only child of Ephraim Hardy, the Chadleigh blacksmith — a wellknown man in those parts, whose memory is not forgotten to this day. Just so far as a farmer is supposed to be a bigger man than a blacksmith, Mat's father might be said to have a better standing than mine; but William Price with his small holding and his seven boys, was, in fact, as poor as many a day-labourer; whilst, the blacksmith, well-to-do, bustling, popular, and open-handed, was a person of some importance in the place. All this, however, had nothing to do with Mat and myself. It never occurred to either of us that his jacket was out at elbows, or that our mutual funds came altogether from my pocket. It was enough for us that we sat on the same school-bench, conned our tasks from the same primer, fought each other's battles, screened each other's faults, fished, nutted, played truant, robbed orchards and birds' nests together, and spent every half-hour, authorised or stolen, in each other's society. It was a happy time; but it could not go on for ever. My father, being prosperous, resolved to put me forward in the world. I must know more, and do better, than himself. The forge was not good enough, the little world of Chadleigh not wide enough, for me. Thus it happened that I was still swinging the satchel when Mat was whistling

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at the plough, and that at last, when my future course was shaped out, we were separated, as it then seemed to us, for life. For, blacksmith's son as I was, furnace and forge, in some form or other, pleased me best, and I chose to be a working engineer. So my father by-and-by apprenticed me to a Birmingham iron-master; and, having bidden farewell to Mat, and Chadleigh, and the grey old Tors in the shadow of which I had spent all the days of my life, I turned my face northward, and went over into "the Black country."

I am not going to dwell on this part of my story. How I worked out the term of my apprenticeship; how, when I had served my full time and become a skilled workman, I took Mat from the plough and brought him over to the Black Country, sharing with him lodging, wages, experience — all, in short, that I had to give; how he, naturally quick to learn and brimful of quiet energy, worked his way up a step at a time, and came by-and-by to be a "first hand" in his own department; how, during all these years of change, and trial, and effort, the old boyish affection never wavered or weakened, but went on, growing with our growth and strengthening with our strength — are facts which I need do no more than outline in this place.

About this time — it will be remembered that I speak of the days when Mat and I were on the bright side of thirty — it happened that our firm contracted to supply six first-class locomotives to run on the new line, then in process of construction, between Turin and Genoa. It was the first Italian order we had taken. We had had dealings with France, Holland, Belgium, Germany; but never with Italy. The connexion, therefore, was new and valuable — all the more valuable

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because our Transalpine neighbours had but lately begun to lay down the iron roads, and would be safe to need more of our good English work as they went on. So the Birmingham firm set themselves to the contract with a will, lengthened our working hours, increased our wages, took on fresh hands, and determined, if energy and promptitude could do it, to place themselves at the head of the Italian labour-market, and stay there. They deserved and achieved success. The six locomotives were not only turned out to time, but were shipped, despatched, and delivered with a promptitude that fairly amazed our Piedmontese consignee. I was not a little proud, you may be sure, when I found myself appointed to superintend the transport of the engines. Being allowed a couple of assistants, I contrived that Mat should be one of them; and thus we enjoyed together the first great holiday of our lives.

It was a wonderful change for two Birmingham operatives fresh from the Black Country. The fairy city, with its crescent background of Alps; the port crowded with strange shipping; the marvellous blue sky and bluer sea; the painted houses on the quays; the quaint cathedral, faced with black and white marble; the street of jewellers, like an Arabian Nights' bazaar; the street of palaces, with its Moorish court-yards, its fountains and orange-trees; the women veiled like brides; the galley-slaves chained two and two; the processions of priests and friars; the everlasting clangour of bells; the babble of a strange tongue; the singular lightness and brightness of the climate — made, altogether, such a combination of wonders that we wandered about, the first day, in a kind of bewildered dream, like children at a fair. Before that week was ended,

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being tempted by the beauty of the place and the liberality of the pay, we had agreed to take service with the Turin and Genoa Railway Company, and to turn our backs upon Birmingham for ever.

Then began a new life — a life so active and healthy, so steeped in fresh air and sunshine, that we sometimes marvelled how we could have endured the gloom of the Black Country. We were constantly up and down the line: now at Genoa, now at Turin, taking trial trips with the locomotives, and placing our old experiences at the service of our new employers.

In the mean while we made Genoa our head-quarters, and hired a couple of rooms over a small shop in a by-street sloping down to the quays. Such a busy little street — so steep and winding that no vehicles could pass through it, and so narrow that the sky looked like a mere strip of deep-blue ribbon overhead! Every house in it, however, was a shop, where the goods encroached on the footway, or were piled about the door, or hung like tapestry from the balconies; and all day long, from dawn to dusk, an incessant stream of passers-by poured up and down between the port and the upper quarter of the city.

Our landlady was the widow of a silver-worker, and lived by the sale of filigree ornaments, cheap jewellery, combs, fans, and toys in ivory and jet. She had an only daughter named Gianetta, who served in the shop, and was simply the most beautiful woman I ever beheld. Looking back across this weary chasm of years, and bringing her image before me (as I can and do) with all the vividness of life, I am unable, even now, to detect a flaw in her beauty. I do not attempt to describe her. I do not believe there is a poet living

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who could find the words to do it; but I once saw a picture that was somewhat like her (not half so lovely, but still like her), and, for aught I know, that picture is still hanging where I last looked at it — upon the walls of the Louvre. It represented a woman with brown eyes and golden hair, looking over her shoulder into a circular mirror held by a bearded man in the background. In this man, as I then understood, the artist had painted his own portrait; in her, the portrait of the woman he loved. No picture that I ever saw was half so beautiful, and yet it was not worthy to be named in the same breath with Gianetta Coneglia.

You may be certain the widow's shop did not want for customers. All Genoa knew how fair a face was to be seen behind that dingy little counter; and Gianetta, flirt as she was, had more lovers than she cared to remember, even by name. Gentle and simple, rich and poor, from the red-capped sailor buying his earrings or his amulet, to the nobleman carelessly purchasing half the filigrees in the window, she treated them all alike — encouraged them, laughed at them, led them on and turned them off at her pleasure. She had no more heart than a marble statue; as Mat and I discovered by-and-by, to our bitter cost.

I cannot tell to this day how it came about, or what first led me to suspect how things were going with us both; but long before the waning of that autumn a coldness had sprung up between my friend and myself. It was nothing that could have been put into words. It was nothing that either of us could have explained or justified, to save his life. We lodged together, ate together, worked together, exactly as before; we even took our long evening's walk together, when

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the day's labour was ended; and except, perhaps, that we were more silent than of old, no mere looker-on could have detected a shadow of change. Yet there it was, silent and subtle, widening the gulf between us every day.

It was not his fault. He was too true and gentle-hearted to have willingly brought about such a state of things between us. Neither do I believe — fiery as my nature is — that it was mine. It was all hers — hers from first to last — the sin, and the shame, and the sorrow.

If she had shown a fair and open preference for either of us, no real harm could have come of it. I would have put any constraint upon myself, and, Heaven knows! have borne any suffering, to see Mat really happy. I know that he would have done the same, and more if he could, for me. But Gianetta cared not one sou for either. She never meant to choose between us. It gratified her vanity to divide us; it amused her to play with us. It would pass my power to tell how, by a thousand imperceptible shades of coquetry — by the lingering of a glance, the substitution of a word, the flitting of a smile — she contrived to turn our heads, and torture our hearts, and lead us on to love her. She deceived us both. She buoyed us both up with hope; she maddened us with jealousy; she crushed us with despair. For my part, when I seemed to wake to a sudden sense of the ruin that was about our path and I saw how the truest friendship that ever bound two lives together was drifting on to wreck and ruin, I asked myself whether any woman in the world was worth what Mat had been to me and I to him. But this was not often. I was readier to shut my eyes

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upon the truth than to face it; and so lived on, wilfully, in a dream.

Thus the autumn passed away, and winter came—the strange, treacherous Genoese winter, green with olive and ilex, brilliant with sunshine, and bitter with storm. Still, rivals at heart and friends on the surface, Mat and I lingered on in our lodging in the Vicolo Balba. Still Gianetta held us with her fatal wiles and her still more fatal beauty. At length there came a day when I felt I could bear the horrible misery and suspense of it no longer. The sun, I vowed, should not go down before I knew my sentence. She must choose between us. She must either take me or let me go. I was reckless. I was desperate. I was determined to know the worst, or the best. If the worst, I would at once turn my back upon Genoa, upon her, upon all the pursuits and purposes of my past life, and begin the world anew. This I told her, passionately and sternly, standing before her in the little parlour at the back of the shop, one bleak December morning.

"If it's Mat whom you care for most," I said, "tell me so in one word, and I will never trouble you again. He is better worth your love. I am jealous and exacting; he is as trusting and unselfish as a woman. Speak, Gianetta; am I to bid you good-bye for ever and ever, or am I to write home to my mother in England, bidding her pray to God to bless the woman who has promised to be my wife?"

"You plead your friend's cause well," she replied, haughtily. "Matteo ought to be grateful. This is more than he ever did for you."

"Give me my answer, for pity's sake," I exclaimed, "and let me go!"

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"You are free to go or stay, Signor Inglese," she replied. "I am not your jailer."

"Do you bid me leave you?"

"Beata Madre! not I."

"Will you marry me, if I stay?"

She laughed aloud—such a merry, mocking, musical laugh, like a chime of silver bells!

"You ask too much," she said.

"Only what you have led me to hope these five or six months past!"

"That is just what Matteo says. How tiresome you both are!"

"O, Gianetta," I said, passionately, "be serious for one moment! I am a rough fellow, it is true — not half good enough or clever enough for you; but I love you with my whole heart, and an Emperor could do no more."

"I am glad of it," she replied; "I do not want you to love me less."

"Then you cannot wish to make me wretched! Will you promise me?"

"I promise nothing," said she, with another burst of laughter; "except that I will not marry Matteo!"

Except that she would not marry Matteo! Only that. Not a word of hope for myself. Nothing but my friend's condemnation. I might get comfort, and selfish triumph, and some sort of base assurance out of that, if I could. And so, to my shame, I did. I grasped at the vain encouragement, and, fool that I was! let her put me off again unanswered. From that day, I gave up all effort at self-control, and let myself drift blindly on — to destruction.

At length things became so bad between Mat and

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myself that it seemed as if an open rupture must be at hand. We avoided each other, scarcely exchanged a dozen sentences in a day, and fell away from all our old familiar habits. At this time — I shudder to remember it! — there were moments when I felt that I hated him.

Thus, with the trouble deepening and widening between us day by day, another month or five weeks went by; and February came; and, with February, the Carnival. They said in Genoa that it was a particularly dull carnival; and so it must have been; for, save a flag or two hung out in some of the principal streets, and a sort of festa look about the women, there were no special indications of the season. It was, I think, the second day when, having been on the line all the morning, I returned to Genoa at dusk, and, to my surprise, found Mat Price on the platform. He came up to me, and laid his hand on my arm.

"You are in late," he said. "I have been waiting for you three-quarters of an hour. Shall we dine together to-day?"

Impulsive as I am, this evidence of returning good will at once called up my better feelings.

"With all my heart, Mat," I replied; "shall we go to Gozzoli's?"

"No, no," he said, hurriedly. "Some quieter place — some place where we can talk. I have something to say to you."

I noticed now that he looked pale and agitated, and an uneasy sense of apprehension stole upon me. We decided on the "Pescatore," a little out-of-the-way trattoria, down near the Molo Vecchio. There, in a dingy salon, frequented chiefly by seamen, and re-

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dolent of tobacco, we ordered our simple dinner. Mat scarcely swallowed a morsel; but, calling presently for a bottle of Sicilian wine, drank eagerly.

"Well, Mat," I said, as the last dish was placed on the table, "what news have you?"

"Bad."

"I guessed that from your face."

"Bad for you — bad for me. Gianetta."

"What of Gianetta?"

He passed his hand nervously across his lips.

"Gianetta is false — worse than false," he said, in a hoarse voice. "She values an honest man's heart just as she values a flower for her hair — wears it for a day, then throws it aside for ever. She has cruelly wronged us both."

"In what way? Good Heavens, speak out!"

"In the worst way that a woman can wrong those who love her. She has sold herself to the Marchese Loredano."

The blood rushed to my head and face in a burning torrent. I could scarcely see, and dared not trust myself to speak.

"I saw her going towards the cathedral," he went on, hurriedly. "It was about three hours ago. I thought she might be going to confession, so I hung back and followed her at a distance. When she got inside, however, she went straight to the back of the pulpit, where this man was waiting for her. You remember him — an old man who used to haunt the shop a month or two back. Well, seeing how deep in conversation they were, and how they stood close under the pulpit with their backs towards the church, I fell into a passion of anger and went straight up the aisle, intending to say

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or do something: I scarcely knew what; but, at all events, to draw her arm through mine, and take her home. When I came within a few feet, however, and found only a big pillar between myself and them, I paused. They could not see me, nor I them; but I could hear their voices distinctly, and — and I listened."

"Well, and you heard ——"

"The terms of a shameful bargain — beauty on the one side, gold on the other; so many thousand francs a year; a villa near Naples —— Pah! it makes me sick to repeat it."

And, with a shudder, he poured out another glass of wine and drank it at a draught.

"After that," he said, presently, "I made no effort to bring her away. The whole thing was so cold-blooded, so deliberate, so shameful, that I felt I had only to wipe her out of my memory, and leave her to her fate. I stole out of the cathedral, and walked about here by the sea for ever so long, trying to get my thoughts straight. Then I remembered you, Ben; and the recollection of how this wanton had come between us and broken up our lives drove me wild. So I went up to the station and waited for you. I felt you ought to know it all; and — and I thought, perhaps, that we might go back to England together."

"The Marchese Loredano!"

It was all that I could say; all that I could think. As Mat had just said of himself, I felt "like one stunned."

"There is one other thing I may as well tell you," he added, reluctantly, "if only to show you how false a woman can be. We — we were to have been married next month."

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"*We?* Who? What do you mean?"

"I mean that we were to have been married — Gianetta and I."

A sudden storm of rage, of scorn, of incredulity, swept over me at this, and seemed to carry my senses away.

"*You!*" I cried. "Gianetta marry you! I don't believe it."

"I wish I had not believed it," he replied, looking up as if puzzled by my vehemence. "But she promised me; and I thought, when she promised it, she meant it."

"She told me, weeks ago, that she would never be your wife!"

His colour rose, his brow darkened; but when his answer came, it was as calm as the last.

"Indeed!" he said. "Then it is only one baseness more. She told me that she had refused you; and that was why we kept our engagement secret."

"Tell the truth, Mat Price," I said, well-nigh beside myself with suspicion. "Confess that every word of this is false! Confess that Gianetta will not listen to you, and that you are afraid I may succeed where you have failed. As perhaps I shall — as perhaps I shall, after all!"

"Are you mad?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"That I believe it's just a trick to get me away to England — that I don't credit a syllable of your story. You're a liar, and I hate you!"

He rose, and, laying one hand on the back of his chair, looked me sternly in the face.

"If you were not Benjamin Hardy," he said, de-

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liberately, "I would thrash you within an inch of your life."

The words had no sooner passed his lips than I sprang at him. I have never been able distinctly to remember what followed. A curse — a blow — a struggle — a moment of blind fury — a cry — a confusion of tongues — a circle of strange faces. Then I see Mat lying back in the arms of a bystander; myself trembling and bewildered — the knife dropping from my grasp; blood upon the floor; blood upon my hands; blood upon his shirt. And then I hear those dreadful words:

"O, Ben, you have murdered me!"

He did not die — at least, not there and then. He was carried to the nearest hospital, and lay for some weeks between life and death. His case, they said, was difficult and dangerous. The knife had gone in just below the collarbone, and pierced down into the lungs. He was not allowed to speak or turn — scarcely to breathe with freedom. He might not even lift his head to drink. I sat by him day and night all through that sorrowful time. I gave up my situation on the railway; I quitted my lodging in the Vicolo Balba; I tried to forget that such a woman as Gianetta Coneglia had ever drawn breath. I lived only for Mat; and he tried to live more, I believe, for my sake than his own. Thus, in the bitter silent hours of pain and penitence, when no hand but mine approached his lips or smoothed his pillow, the old friendship came back with even more than its old trust and faithfulness. He forgave me, fully and freely; and I would thankfully have given my life for him.

At length there came one bright spring morning,

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when, dismissed as convalescent, he tottered out through the hospital gates, leaning on my arm, and feeble as an infant. He was not cured; neither, as I then learned to my horror and anguish, was it possible that he ever could be cured. He might live, with care, for some years; but the lungs were injured beyond hope of remedy, and a strong or healthy man he could never be again. These, spoken aside to me, were the parting words of the chief physician, who advised me to take him further south without delay.

I took him to a little coast-town called Rocca, some thirty miles beyond Genoa — a sheltered lonely place along the Riviera, where the sea was even bluer than the sky, and the cliffs were green with strange tropical plants, cacti, and aloes, and Egyptian palms. Here we lodged in the house of a small tradesman; and Mat, to use his own words, "set to work at getting well in good earnest." But, alas! it was a work which no earnestness could forward. Day after day he went down to the beach, and sat for hours drinking the sea air and watching the sails that came and went in the offing. By-and-by he could go no further than the garden of the house in which we lived. A little later, and he spent his days on a couch beside the open window, waiting patiently for the end. Ay, for the end! It had come to that. He was fading fast, waning with the waning summer, and conscious that the Reaper was at hand. His whole aim now was to soften the agony of my remorse, and prepare me for what must shortly come.

"I would not live longer, if I could," he said, lying on his couch one summer evening, and looking up to the stars. "If I had my choice at this moment,

I would ask to go. I should like Gianetta to know that I forgave her."

"She shall know it," I said, trembling suddenly from head to foot.

He pressed my hand.

"And you'll write to father?"

"I will."

I had drawn a little back, that he might not see the tears raining down my cheeks; but he raised himself on his elbow, and looked round.

"Don't fret, Ben," he whispered; laid his head back wearily upon the pillow — and so died.

And this was the end of it. This was the end of all that made life life to me. I buried him there, in hearing of the wash of a strange sea on a strange shore. I stayed by the grave till the priest and the bystanders were gone. I saw the earth filled in to the last sod, and the gravedigger stamp it down with his feet. Then, and not till then, I felt that I had lost him for ever — the friend I had loved, and hated, and slain. Then, and not till then, I knew that all rest, and joy, and hope were over for me. From that moment my heart hardened within me, and my life was filled with loathing. Day and night, land and sea, labour and rest, food and sleep, were alike hateful to me. It was the curse of Cain, and that my brother had pardoned me made it lie none the lighter. Peace on earth was for me no more, and goodwill towards men was dead in my heart for ever. Remorse softens some natures; but it poisoned mine. I hated all mankind, but above all mankind I hated the

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woman who had come between us two, and ruined both our lives.

He had bidden me seek her out, and be the messenger of his forgiveness. I had sooner have gone down to the port of Genoa and taken upon me the serge cap and shotted chain of any galley-slave at his toil in the public works; but for all that I did my best to obey him. I went back, alone and on foot. I went back, intending to say to her, "Gianetta Coneglia, he forgave you; but God never will." But she was gone. The little shop was let to a fresh occupant; and the neighbours only knew that mother and daughter had left the place quite suddenly, and that Gianetta was supposed to be under the "protection" of the Marchese Loredano. How I made inquiries here and there — how I heard that they had gone to Naples — and how, being restless and reckless of my time, I worked my passage in a French steamer, and followed her — how, having found the sumptuous villa that was now hers, I learned that she had left there some ten days and gone to Paris, where the Marchese was ambassador for the Two Sicilies — how, working my passage back again to Marseilles, and thence, in part by the river and in part by the rail, I made my way to Paris — how, day after day, I paced the streets and the parks, watched at the ambassador's gates, followed his carriage, and at last, after weeks of waiting, discovered her address — how, having written to request an interview, her servants spurned me from her door and flung my letter in my face — how, looking up at her windows, I then, instead of forgiving, solemnly cursed her with the bitterest curses my tongue could devise — and how, this done, I shook the dust

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of Paris from my feet, and became a wanderer upon the face of the earth, are facts which I have now no space to tell.

The next six or eight years of my life were shifting and unsettled enough. A morose and restless man, I took employment here and there, as opportunity offered, turning my hand to many things, and caring little what I earned, so long as the work was hard and the change incessant. First of all I engaged myself as chief engineer in one of the French steamers plying between Marseilles and Constantinople. At Constantinople I changed to one of the Austrian Lloyd's boats, and worked for some time to and from Alexandria, Jaffa, and those parts. After that, I fell in with a party of Mr. Layard's men at Cairo, and so went up the Nile and took a turn at the excavations of the mound of Nimroud. Then I became a working engineer on the new desert line between Alexandria and Suez; and by-and-by I worked my passage out to Bombay, and took service as an engine fitter on one of the great Indian railways. I stayed a long time in India; that is to say, I stayed nearly two years, which was a long time for me; and I might not even have left so soon, but for the war that was declared just then with Russia. That tempted me. For I loved danger and hardship as other men love safety and ease; and as for my life, I had sooner have parted from it than kept it, any day. So I came straight back to England; betook myself to Portsmouth, where my testimonials at once procured me the sort of berth I wanted. I went out to the Crimea in the engine-room of one of her Majesty's war steamers.

I served with the fleet, of course, while the war

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lasted; and when it was over, went wandering off again, rejoicing in my liberty. This time I went to Canada, and after working on a railway then in progress near the American frontier, I presently passed over into the States; journeyed from north to south; crossed the Rocky Mountains; tried a month or two of life in the gold country; and then, being seized with a sudden, aching, unaccountable longing to revisit that solitary grave so far away on the Italian coast, I turned my face once more towards Europe.

Poor little grave! I found it rank with weeds, the cross half shattered, the inscription half effaced. It was as if no one had loved him, or remembered him. I went back to the house in which we had lodged together. The same people were still living there, and made me kindly welcome. I stayed with them for some weeks. I weeded, and planted, and trimmed the grave with my own hands, and set up a fresh cross in pure white marble. It was the first season of rest that I had known since I laid him there; and when at last I shouldered my knapsack and set forth again to battle with the world, I promised myself that, God willing, I would creep back to Rocca, when my days drew near to ending, and be buried by his side.

From hence, being, perhaps, a little less inclined than formerly for very distant parts, and willing to keep within reach of that grave, I went no further than Mantua, where I engaged myself as an engine-driver on the line, then not long completed, between that city and Venice. Somehow, although I had been trained to the working engineering, I preferred in these days to earn my bread by driving. I liked the

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excitement of it, the sense of power, the rush of the air, the roar of the fire, the flitting of the landscape. Above all, I enjoyed to drive a night express. The worse the weather, the better it suited with my sullen temper. For I was as hard, and harder than ever. The years had done nothing to soften me. They had only confirmed all that was blackest and bitterest in my heart.

I continued pretty faithful to the Mantua line, and had been working on it steadily for more than seven months when that which I am now about to relate took place.

It was in the month of March. The weather had been unsettled for some days past, and the nights stormy; and at one point along the line, near Ponte di Brenta, the waters had risen and swept away some seventy yards of embankment. Since this accident, the trains had all been obliged to stop at a certain spot between Padua and Ponte di Brenta, and the passengers, with their luggage, had thence to be transported in all kinds of vehicles, by a circuitous country road, to the nearest station on the other side of the gap, where another train and engine awaited them. This, of course, caused great confusion and annoyance, put all our time-tables wrong, and subjected the public to a large amount of inconvenience. In the mean while an army of navvies was drafted to the spot, and worked day and night to repair the damage. At this time I was driving two through trains each day; namely, one from Mantua to Venice in the early morning, and a return train from Venice to Mantua in the afternoon — a tolerably full day's work, covering about one hundred and ninety miles of ground, and

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occupying between ten and eleven hours. I was therefore not best pleased when, on the third or fourth day after the accident, I was informed that, in addition to my regular allowance of work, I should that evening be required to drive a special train to Venice. This special train, consisting of an engine, a single carriage, and a break-van, was to leave the Mantua platform at eleven; at Padua the passengers were to alight and find post-chaises waiting to convey them to Ponte di Brenta; at Ponte di Brenta another engine, carriage, and break-van were to be in readiness. I was charged to accompany them throughout.

"Corpo di Bacco," said the clerk who gave me my orders, "you need not look so black, man. You are certain of a handsome gratuity. Do you know who goes with you?"

"Not I."

"Not you, indeed! Why, it's the Duca Loredano, the Neapolitan ambassador."

"Loredano!" I stammered. "What Loredano? There was a Marchese ——"

"Certo. He was the Marchese Loredano some years ago; but he has come into his dukedom since then."

"He must be a very old man by this time."

"Yes, he is old; but what of that? He is as hale, and bright, and stately as ever. You have seen him before?"

"Yes," I said, turning away; "I have seen him — years ago."

"You have heard of his marriage?"

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I shook my head.

The clerk chuckled, rubbed his hands, and shrugged his shoulders.

"An extraordinary affair," he said. "Made a tremendous esclandre at the time. He married his mistress — quite a common, vulgar girl — a Genoese — very handsome; but not received, of course. Nobody visits her."

"Married her!" I exclaimed. "Impossible."

"True, I assure you."

I put my hand to my head. I felt as if I had had a fall or a blow.

"Does she — does she go to-night?" I faltered.

"O dear, yes — goes everywhere with him — never lets him out of her sight. You'll see her — la bella Duchessa!"

With this my informant laughed, and rubbed his hands again, and went back to his office.

The day went by, I scarcely know how, except that my whole soul was in a tumult of rage and bitterness. I returned from my afternoon's work about 7.25, and at 10.30 I was once again at the station. I had examined the engine; given instructions to the Fochista, or stoker, about the fire; seen to the supply of oil; and got all in readiness, when, just as I was about to compare my watch with the clock in the ticket-office, a hand was laid upon my arm, and a voice in my ear said:

"Are you the engine-driver who is going on with this special train?"

I had never seen the speaker before. He was a small, dark man, muffled up about the throat, with

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blue glasses, a large black beard, and his hat drawn low upon his eyes.

"You are a poor man, I suppose," he said, in a quick, eager whisper, "and, like other poor men, would not object to be better off. Would you like to earn a couple of thousand florins?"

"In what way?"

"Hush! You are to stop at Padua, are you not, and to go on again at Ponte di Brenta?"

I nodded.

"Suppose you did nothing of the kind. Suppose, instead of turning off the steam, you jump off the engine, and let the train run on?"

"Impossible. There are seventy yards of embankment gone, and ——"

"Basta! I know that. Save yourself, and let the train run on. It would be nothing but an accident."

I turned hot and cold; I trembled; my heart beat fast, and my breath failed.

"Why do you tempt me?" I faltered.

"For Italy's sake," he whispered; "for liberty's sake. I know you are no Italian; but, for all that, you may be a friend. This Loredano is one of his country's bitterest enemies. Stay, here are the two thousand florins."

I thrust his hand back fiercely.

"No — no," I said. "No blood-money. If I do it, I do it neither for Italy nor for money; but for vengeance."

"For vengeance!" he repeated.

At this moment the signal was given for backing up to the platform. I sprang to my place upon the

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engine without another word. When I again looked towards the spot where he had been standing, the stranger was gone.

I saw them take their places — Duke and Duchess, secretary and priest, valet and maid. I saw the station-master bow them into the carriage, and stand, bareheaded, beside the door. I could not distinguish their faces; the platform was too dusk, and the glare from the engine fire too strong; but I recognised her stately figure, and the poise of her head. Had I not been told who she was, I should have known her by those traits alone. Then the guard's whistle shrilled out, and the station-master made his last bow; I turned the steam on; and we started.

My blood was on fire. I no longer trembled or hesitated. I felt as if every nerve was iron, and every pulse instinct with deadly purpose. She was in my power, and I would be revenged. She should die — she, for whom I had stained my soul with my friend's blood! She should die, in the plentitude of her wealth and her beauty, and no power upon earth should save her!

The stations flew past. I put on more steam; I bade the fireman heap in the coke, and stir the blazing mass. I would have outstripped the wind, had it been possible. Faster and faster — hedges and trees, bridges and stations, flashing past — villages no sooner seen than gone — telegraph wires twisting, and dipping, and twining themselves in one, with the awful swiftness of our pace! Faster and faster, till the fireman at my side looks white and scared, and refuses to add more fuel to the furnace. Faster and faster, till the wind

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rushes in our faces and drives the breath back upon our lips.

I would have scorned to save myself. I meant to die with the rest. Mad as I was — and I believe from my very soul that I was utterly mad for the time — I felt a passing pang of pity for the old man and his suite. I would have spared the poor fellow at my side, too, if I could; but the pace at which we were going made escape impossible.

Vicenza was passed — a mere confused vision of lights. Pojana flew by. At Padua, but nine miles distant, our passengers were to alight. I saw the fireman's face turned upon me in remonstrance; I saw his lips move, though I could not hear a word; I saw his expression change suddenly from remonstrance to a deadly terror, and then — merciful Heaven! then, for the first time, I saw that he and I were no longer alone upon the engine.

There was a third man — a third man standing on my right hand, as the fireman was standing on my left — a tall, stalwart man, with short curling hair, and a flat Scotch cap upon his head. As I fell back in the first shock of surprise, he stepped nearer; took my place at the engine, and turned the steam off. I opened my lips to speak to him; he turned his head slowly, and looked me in the face.

Matthew Price!

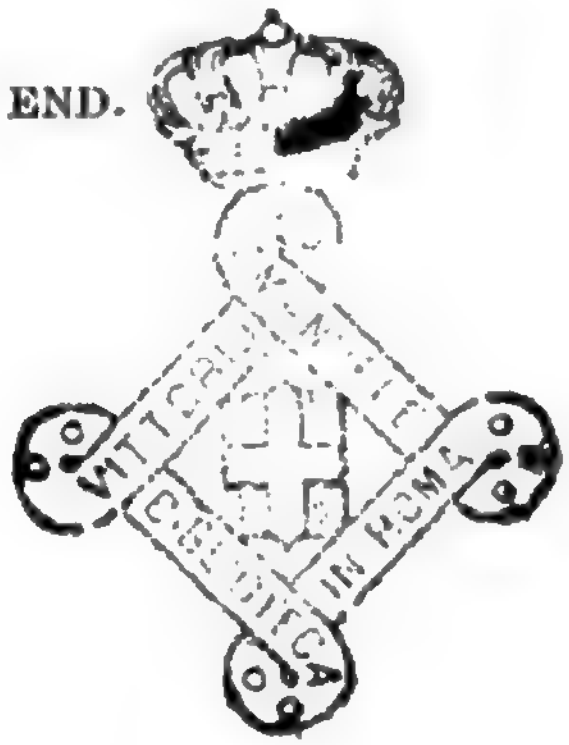
I uttered one long wild cry, flung my arms wildly up above my head, and fell as if I had been smitten with an axe.

I am prepared for the objections that may be made to my story. I expect, as a matter of course, to be

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told that this was an optical illusion, or that I was suffering from pressure on the brain, or even that I laboured under an attack of temporary insanity. I have heard all these arguments before, and, if I may be forgiven for saying so, I have no desire to hear them again. My own mind has been made up upon this subject for many a year. All that I can say — all that I *know* is — that Matthew Price came back from the dead to save my soul and the lives of those whom I, in my guilty rage, would have hurried to destruction. I believe this as I believe in the mercy of Heaven and the forgiveness of repentant sinners.

THE END.



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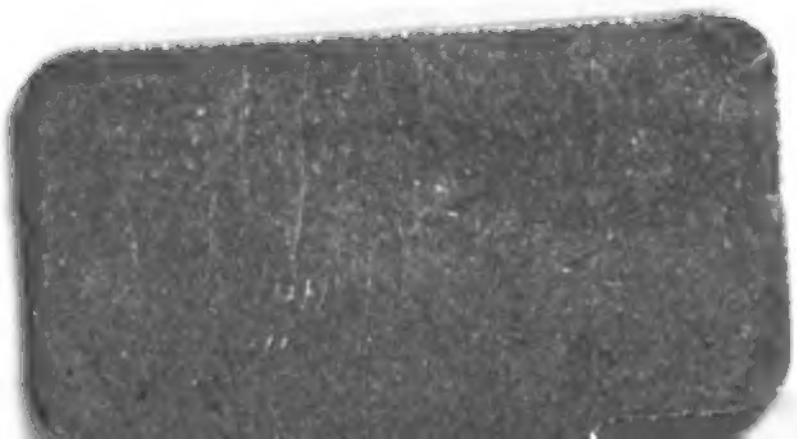
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